NATION

SC rejects PIL on caste data in census

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BUSINESS

Markets rebound over 1% after Budget-day drubbing

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SPORTS

No Indo-Pak contest, WC could cause losses upto USD 250 million

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Chaos in LS as RaGa attacks govt on China

BJP fumes as he quotes excerpts from ex-Army gen's memoir; LoP says PM let Army down

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

Chaos erupted in the Lok Sabha on Monday after Rahul Gandhi quoted from former Army chief MM Naravane's memoir on the 2020 India-China clash.

The move triggered sharp objections from BJP, which accused Gandhi of misleading Parliament and undermining the armed forces.

Gandhi was replying to the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address when he first sought to respond to allegations of "anti-nationalism" levelled against the Congress by BJP MP Tejasvi Surya. During his speech, Gandhi cited excerpts from the memoir, claiming it referred to Chinese tanks advancing towards Indian positions during the 2020 clash and that the then Army chief had informed the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Naravane reportedly wrote in the book that the Chinese tanks with infantry advanced toward strategic Indian positions near Rechin La. These tanks moved to a distance of a few hundred metres of Indian troops. The general said that he struggled for clear orders from political and military leadership.

BJP immediately objected and did not let Gandhi speak at all. Treasury bench members argued that Naravane's book had not yet been published. Speaker Om Birla too disallowed Gandhi from talking.

Rajnath and Home Minister Amit Shah accused Gandhi of violating parliamentary norms. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju warned that Gandho could face suspension.

Despite this, Gandhi persisted, alleging that the government was "afraid of the truth" emerging. Speaking to reporters outside Parliament, he claimed the memoir shows Modi and Rajnath "let down" the Army. "They are scared because if this comes out, the reality of Modi and Rajnath will be revealed. What happened to the 56-inch chest when China was advancing towards us?" Gandhi said. Naravane's memoir, 'Four Stars of Destiny', was supposed to be published by Penguin. Excerpts from the book were carried by media outlets after it failed to receive government clearance. *—PTI*

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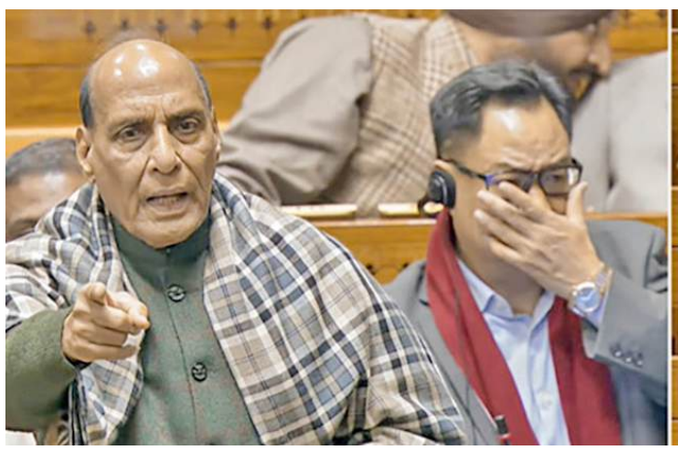

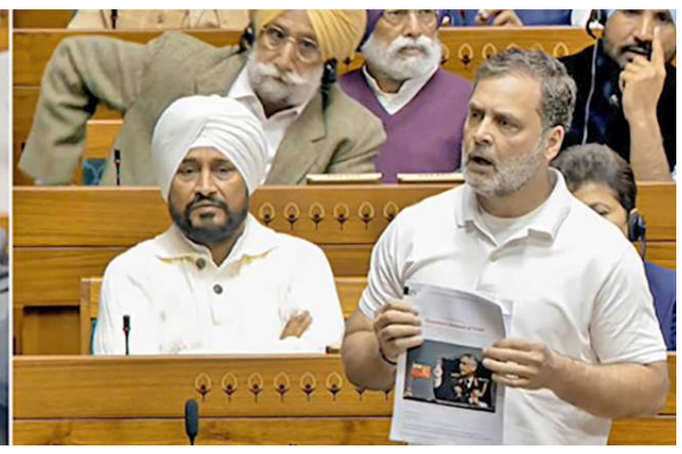

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh countered Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, who was holding up a magazine article citing a memoir by former Army chief General MM Naravane on the 2020 Ladakh standoff between India and China on Monday in Lok Sabha *—PTI*

Bengal, Kerala MPs protest outside Parl

Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Samajwadi Party MPs protested in the Lok Sabha over heavy security outside West Bengal's Banga Bhawan, where families affected by the state's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) are staying. TMC leaders, including Mamata Banerjee, demanded justice for the families. Meanwhile, Kerala opposition MPs staged a protest against the Union Budget 2026, calling it "anti-Kerala," while Congress MLAs boycotted the state Assembly over rejection of a discussion on alleged prison law violations.

India-US trade deal reached, tariffs to go down to 18%

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

The United States has agreed to a trade deal with India to reduce the reciprocal tariff from 25 per cent to 18 per cent, US President Donald Trump said, citing friendship and respect for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and acting on his request. This follows Trump's conversation with Modi. India–US ties have been under severe strain after Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to 50 per cent, including an additional 25 per cent duty on India's purchase of Russian crude oil. Relations also soured over other issues, such as Trump's claim of resolving the India–Pakistan conflict in May last year and Washington's new H1B visa fee hike policy. *—PTI*

Didi walks out of a meet with CEC, calls him a liar

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday walked out of a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over the SIR issue, accusing him of being "liar", "arrogant" and alleged that the poll panel had "humiliated" their delegation. Wearing black shawls as a mark of "protest", the TMC supremo, accompanied by party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and MP Kalyan Banerjee, and 12 members of "SIR affected families" from West Bengal, met Chief Election Commissioner Kumar and fellow ECs here, her party said. *—PTI*

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Bagalkot woman kills her 3 kids, attempts suicide

BAGALKOT, 2 FEB

A 28-year-old woman allegedly attempted suicide by consuming poison after hanging her three children to death following a domestic dispute at her home in Bagalkot, police said on Monday. The incident occurred at Hiremuchchalgudda village in Badami taluk on Sunday. The deceased were identified as Samruddhi Goudar, 5, Preetam Goudar, 4, and Suksheet Goudar, 2, police said. Police said, the mother of the children, Roopa Hanumanth Goudar, however, survived the suicide attempt and is undergoing treatment. A case has been registered. Preliminary investigation has revealed that upset over regular fights with her husband and mother-in-law, the woman committed the crime. *—PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

K'taka Urdu school timings changed for Ramadan

BENGALURU, 2 FEB

Karnataka government has announced a change in school working hours for Urdu-medium primary, upper primary, and high schools across the state during Ramadan in the 2025-26 academic year.

State Home Minister G Parameshwara said the move should not be seen as appeasement of minorities but as a practical adjustment for students observing the holy month. The revised timings apply to all government, aided, and unaided Urdu-medium institutions.

According to a government circular released on Monday, the decision follows a review of previous orders, including a 2002 Standing Order that fixed school hours from 8am to 12.45 pm, and the 2023 Activity Action Plan, which recommended regular school hours of 10am to 4.20 pm.

The government also considered a representation submitted by the Karnataka State Primary School Education Association on 17 January, 2026. As per the new order, the adjusted timings will be effective from the start of Ramadan until 20 March, 2026.

Officials said the revised schedule is intended to accommodate religious observances while ensuring continuity in academic activities.

Justifying the move, Parameshwara said these were aimed at bringing Urdu medium children equal to others.

"If somebody is not equal to you in all terms, like SC/ST why do you think a reservation was given to SC/STs in the Constitution from the beginning? Why do you think backward classes are considered in the Constitution itself? These are the people neglected for thousands of years. Don't you want them to become equal to others and build an equal society?"—*PTI*

Tribunal to solve K'taka, TN river row

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Centre to constitute a tribunal to adjudicate the dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over sharing the waters of the Pennaiyar river, and to issue a notification within a month.

The Pennaiyar dispute comes amid long-standing river water tensions between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, particularly over the Cauvery.

The Cauvery originates in Karnataka and flows into Tamil Nadu, with both States depending on it for irrigation and drinking water, triggering disputes during poor monsoon years.

Tamil Nadu moved the apex court in 2018 through an original suit against Karnataka, objecting to the construction of check dams and diversion structures on the Pennaiyar.

It argued that water in an inter-State river is a national asset and that no State can claim exclusive rights over it. *—PTI*

SC seeks govt's replies on anti-conversion laws plea

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and 12 states on a PIL by the National Council of Churches in India challenging anti-conversion laws. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi issued notices and gave four weeks to file replies. Senior advocate Meenakshi Arora sought a stay on the laws. The court tagged the plea with pending petitions and said a three-judge bench would hear them. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the Centre's reply was ready. Notices were issued to 12 states including Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka within the stipulated four-week period. *—PTI*

Jaishankar embarks on 3-day visit to US

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday embarked on a three-day visit to the US to attend a Washington-led ministerial meeting on critical minerals supply chain.

Jaishankar's visit assumes significance as it is being seen as an opportunity to address the sharp downturn in the relations between the two strategic partners. It is expected that the minister will hold bilateral talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other senior officials of the Trump administration. The 2 to 5 February to meeting on the Critical Minerals Ministerial has been convened by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, an external affairs ministry statement said. It said the ministerial will focus on supply chain resilience, clean energy transitions, and strategic cooperation in critical minerals. *—PTI*

Missing B'luru boy found dead in BWSSB sump

BENGALURU, 2 FEB

A Class 9 student was found dead after allegedly falling into an open concrete chamber at a Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) work site on Kanakapura Road in south Bengaluru.

The victim, identified as 14-year-old Preetham, had been missing since 29 January. According to police, he was walking along the pipeline road stretch when he is suspected to have accidentally slipped into an uncovered concrete chamber at a site where BWSSB works were under way. The chamber reportedly had no barricades or warning signs. Preetham's father, Rajinikanth, a private company employee, had lodged a missing person complaint at the Kaggalipura police station after the boy failed to return home. A search was launched, and the body was found inside the chamber on Sunday after locals noticed a foul smell from the pipeline work site near Tatangudi.

The incident has sparked anger among residents, who alleged police non-cooperation during the search. Preetham's mother, Pushpa, claimed the family was told by police to search on their own as they were "busy". BWSSB said they had received no prior complaint about the chamber being left open and that an enquiry is under way. *—Agencies*

Odisha: Warden sexually harasses blind, deaf girls

BHUBANESWAR, 2 FEB

A male warden of the Red Cross School for the Blind, Deaf, and Mute here has been accused of touching girls inappropriately and dragging them against their will.

The allegation has been levelled by both girls and boys of the said school. They have charged the warden with physical and sexual harassment.

The warden in question Sandhya Darshan Mahapatra has been blamed for touching girls inappropriately.

According to boys they invited the wrath of the warden after reporting about the incident and are being mentally and physically harassed.

The written complaint and video footage reportedly showed the physically impaired students signalling distress through gestures. District authorities have formed a committee to look into the complaints in the matter.

The video clippings showed the warden making inappropriate physical contact with a girl student. He touches her back and shoulder. Another image showed him touching a girl's arm in a secluded, dark corner of the school.

Kalahandi District Child Protection Officer Shailendu Mahapatra has confirmed having received the complaints. He said a committee, headed by the Additional District Magistrate (ADM-General), was probing the matter. - *—Agencies*

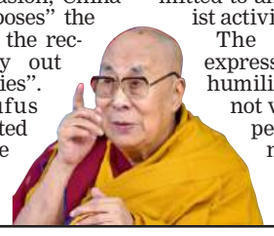
Dalai Lama wins Grammy, China sees red

DHARAMSHALA, 2 FEB

The Dalai Lama has won a Grammy for his spoken word album 'Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama', while China deplored the international recognition.

While the Tibetan spiritual leader's followers in the Himachal Pradesh's Dharamshala and elsewhere celebrated the occasion, China said it "firmly opposes" the Dalai Lama using the recognition to carry out "anti-China activities".

Singer Rufus Wainwright accepted the award in the category for 'audio books, narration and storytelling' on behalf of the Dalai Lama. He figures in the album along with singers Maggie Rogers and Andra Day.



Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian reiterated China's allegation that the 90-year-old spiritual leader is carrying out separatist activity in the name of religion.The Dalai Lama is not purely a religious person, Lin said.

"He is a political exile committed to anti-Chinese separatist activity," he said.

The Dalai Lama expressed gratitude and humility, saying he did not view the award as a personal achievement. *—PTI*

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THE RED FLAGS

AI pilot flags fuel switch defect on Boeing 787

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

An Air India pilot flagged a possible defect with one of the engine fuel control switches on a Boeing 787 aircraft, after which the airline grounded the plane.

Engine fuel control switches have been at the focus of the investigation into the fatal crash of an Air India Boeing 787 jet in Ahmedabad in June last year, with the preliminary probe report saying that the accident occurred after both engines of the ill-fated aircraft were starved as both its fuel control switches transitioned from 'RUN' to 'CUTOFF' position within a second of each other moments after lift-off.

Engine fuel control switches have been at the focus of the investigation into the June 2024 Air India Boeing 787 crash *—PTI*

- Aviation safety advocacy group Safety Matters Foundation said the crew of the Boeing 787 reported abnormal behaviour of the left fuel control switch.

Aviation safety advocacy group Safety Matters Foundation said, the crew of the Boeing 787 reported abnormal behaviour of the left engine fuel control switch on Monday, as the switch failed to remain locked in the RUN position on two attempts, moving towards CUTOFF.

The aircraft was operating a London-Bengaluru flight.

Air India had informed the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on the matter.

Safety Matters Foundation said called for immediate and transparent disclosure from DGCA and Air India of the findings from the plane's inspection. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Mysuru temple gets record Rs 2.46 crore

MYSURU, 2 FEB

The Srikanteshwara temple in Nanjangud town has recorded a hundi collection of Rs 2.46 crore in the month of January. The temple has also received a total of 50 grams of gold, two kilograms of silver articles and foreign currency. The counting of the hundi collection took place in the presence of the executive officer of the temple, Krishna, and the bank staff at the Dasoha Bhavan, a release said. —*SALAR NEWS*

BJP backs Guv over Hate Bill referral

CM, DKS have put admin in 'coma': Ashoka

SHIVAMOGGA/ BENGALURU, 2 FEB

LoP R Ashoka in the Bengaluru Assembly —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

BJP State President BY Vijayendra on Monday criticised the Congress government over the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, terming it "flawed" and aimed at suppressing the Opposition. He backed Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's decision to send the bill to President Droupadi Murmu for consideration.

Addressing reporters, Vijayendra alleged the legislation was rushed through during the Belagavi winter session without proper discussion and warned it threatened free speech. "In Tarikere, our activist Vikas Puttur was served a notice before even speaking," he said. He cited other instances, including arrests of Bajrang Dal's Sharan Pumpwell and activist Punit Kerehalli, claiming selective enforcement by the Siddaramaiah government.

Vijayendra also accused the state administration of fiscal mismanagement, claiming guarantee schemes were underfunded and excise revenue targets were inflated. He questioned the Congress government's confrontations with the Centre and called for balanced development.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly, R Ashoka, alleged the Siddaramaiah government is "immersed in corruption" and the state administration is in a "coma" due to a power tussle between the CM and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar. Speaking during the motion of thanks to the governor's address, he criticised the Congress for using the Assembly session for political purposes.

Ashoka also slammed the renaming of Ramanagara and accused the government of displaying "allergy" to the name Ram. He highlighted rising corruption, non-payment of Rs 37,370 crore in contractor bills, and rampant middleman activity in the Urban Development Department. —*PTI*

Guv wants hate speech shelved: HM

HM flays Centre, terms Budget 'weakest'

BENGALURU, 2 FEB

Home Minister G Parameshwara in Assembly —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

State Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday launched a twin attack on the Centre and Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, alleging political intent behind both the referral of the Hate Speech and Hate Crime (Prevention) Bill to the President and what he called a "thoroughly disappointing" Union Budget.

Parameshwara said the Governor had questioned 28 points in the bill, passed by both Houses during the winter session in Belagavi, and referred it to President Droupadi Murmu "to dump it in cold storage". "In my opinion, the Governor has intentionally referred it so that it does not come into effect," he alleged, adding that the government would re-examine the legislation if it is returned with observations.

Defending the bill, the minister said it was introduced consciously to address rising instances of hate speech. "We have freedom of speech, but that does not mean one can say anything. We have to see how it impacts society," he said, accusing the BJP of opposing measures aimed at maintaining social harmony.

Turning to the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Parameshwara termed it the weakest among her nine budgets and said it had failed to meet public expectations. He alleged that key sectors such as agriculture, industry, education and infrastructure had been ignored, and claimed the State had received "not even a single scheme worth mentioning".

Out of a total outlay of Rs 53.50 lakh crore, he said, the Centre planned to borrow Rs 16 lakh crore. "After taking such massive loans, what have you given to the people?" he asked.

Separately, he said a team had been formed to probe the suicide of realtor CJ Roy in Bengaluru on 30 January to prevent speculation. —*PTI*

CJ Roy death: Vijayan seeks judicial probe

T'PURAM, 2 FEB

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has sought a judicial inquiry into the death of real estate tycoon CJ Roy during an Income Tax search in Bengaluru on 30 January.

In a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Vijayan said the incident was "a blot on the tax administration" and pointed to serious lapses in search procedures.

Citing the victim's brother, he pointed out claims of harassment, quoting: "My brother cooperated fully and submitted all documents. But the officials kept returning. He told several times that the I-T trouble was unbearable..."

Vijayan said while agreeing that tax evasion is a serious problem, no action leading to the loss of a life can be justified in a democracy.

He said it is quite surprising that the person in whose premises, the I-T department was conducting a search, could lay hands on a gun and shoot himself, when the tax department personnel were going ahead with the search.

When such operations are on, the premises have to be under the tax officials' control and the safe conduct is the responsibility of the officials, Vijayan said in the letter dated 1 February.

The searched person has rights which have to be respected, he said. "It is said that taxation is the price we pay for civilisation. While endorsing this, one has to emphasise that in the name of tax compliance, uncivilised acts to be avoided". — *PTI*

Foxconn faces tax row, locals warn of mass protest

BENGALURU, 2 FEB

- According to local representatives even after writing numerous letters and meetings with the company officials no employment has been provided to the locals as yet

Taiwanese chipmaking firm Foxconn is in the eye of a storm over allegations of flouting building norms and dilly-dallying on jobs to locals at its plant in Devanahalli, in the city with the villagers warning of a mass protest over the issue.

The reported confrontation between Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development Pvt. Ltd. in Devanahalli taluk, Bengaluru Rural district and the Koyira Gram Panchayat and is over alleged tax non-payment, violation of local building norms, and denial of jobs to locals

In a formal notice to Foxconn, the Gram Panchayat has directed the company to submit approved building plans, construction licences, completion and occupancy certificates, and survey-wise built-up area details for its facilities in Doddagollahalli and Aruvanahalli villages, spread over 5.33 lakh square metres.

The Panchayat alleged that information sought by them was available only for vacant sites, even though buildings have already come up and and the company has started its operations.

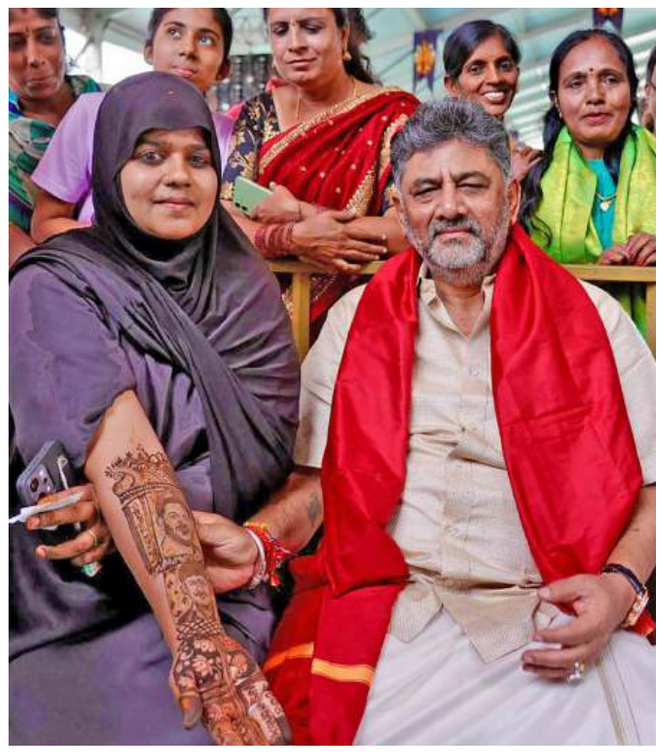
According to local representatives even after writing numerous letters and meetings with the company officials no employment has been provided to the locals as yet. They alleged that instead, Foxconn has been engaged in recruiting people from outside.

The local authorities have also charged the company with failing to pay local taxes, even as other establishments, including the international airport and factories, regularly pay taxes.

The Panchayat has meanwhile, warned that it would initiate strong legal measures against the Taiwanese company as per the provisions of the Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act.

Foxconn has been given by the Panchayat a time frame of seven days to follow its directions failing which the locals have threatened to launch a mass mobilisation against the company on 7 February if their demands were not fulfilled. —*Agencies*

KANAKPURA UTSAV



DyCM DK Shivakumar joins women at Kanakapura Utsav Mehendi competition, where portraits of him and his brother DK Suresh were featured in the henna designs PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

MNREGA workers protest against VB G RAM G scheme demanding the restoration of the orignal scheme, at Freedom Park, in Bengaluru on Monday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

Congress stages overnight protest demanding restoration of MNREGA

MYSURU, 2 FEB

- Protesters raised slogans alleging the new scheme diluted employment guarantees and removed Mahatma Gandhi's name, calling it an insult to the Father of the Nation

Congress workers staged an overnight protest here at the town hall premises from Sunday night, opposing the Union government's decision to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) with the newly introduced VB G RAM G scheme.

The protest, led by the district unit, was part of a nationwide campaign called by the All India Congress Committee demanding restoration of MNREGA.

Addressing the gathering, leaders accused the Centre of undermining the rights of the rural poor, depriving them of guaranteed employment and weakening the Panchayat Raj system by shifting job allocation powers away from gram panchayats.

Protesters raised slogans alleging the new scheme diluted employment guarantees and removed Mahatma Gandhi's name, calling it an insult to the Father of the Nation.

Recalling the UPA government's implementation of MNREGA, Congress leaders said the law ensured 100 days of guaranteed employment for registered agricultural labourers and played a crucial role in rural development and poverty alleviation.

District Minister HC Mahadevappa and KPCC Vice-President VS Ugrappa demanded immediate restoration of MNREGA. Ugrappa criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for failing to fulfil promises such as depositing Rs 15 lakh in citizens' accounts and delivering "acche din". The protest continued peacefully through the night. —*Salar News*

GSI surveys Chikkaballapur for gold

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 2 FEB

In a bid to trace new gold deposits, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) has been conducting surveys in several potential areas, including Beechanahalli Cross in Gudibande taluk of Chikkaballapur district. For the past few days, the GSI has carried out aerial surveys, while teams on the ground analysed the data collected.

Officials said the district Mines and Geology Department had not been formally informed about the exercise. However, sources described it as part of routine surveys periodically undertaken by the GSI in Chikkaballapur and neighbouring Bagepalli taluk.

Ever since the closure of the Bharat Gold Mines in Kolar Gold Fields in 2001 due to depletion of ore, there have been reports of possible gold-bearing pockets in parts of Chikkaballapur. A lecturer from Bagepalli recalled that earlier surveys, including one at Kapuchinnapalli in 2001, indicated traces of gold, though the quantity was not economically viable for extraction.

Chikkaballapur Superintendent of Police Kushal Chousky said such surveys are conducted regularly and the current exercise near Officials said detailed studies would determine future exploration prospects thereafter. —*Salar News*

UPA rule was a decade of lost chances: Tejasvi

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya on Monday dubbed the 10 years of UPA rule a "decade of lost opportunities and a "narrative of excuses" for failing to deliver.

Seconding the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, he said the difference between "weak leadership" and "great leadership" is what differentiates the Congress and the BJP.

He claimed that during UPA years, the president's address was a "narrative of excuses" for the government's failures. He said "weak leadership gives excuses" while "great leadership" delivers despite challenges. This, he said, was the key difference between the Congress and the BJP.

The Bengaluru South MP said that while "leaders have come and gone", Modi returned to power for a record third term in India. — *PTI*

CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY NETWORK

7th edition of Bengaluru GAFX to be held on 27 Feb

BENGALURU, 2 FEB

- The state contributes nearly 20 per cent to the country's media and entertainment industry and is home to over 300 animation, visual effects, gaming, comics, and extended reality studios, employing 15,000 people

The Karnataka government today announced the seventh edition of 'Bengaluru GAFX,' one of the country's largest AVGC-XR conferences and exhibitions.

Supported by the government and the Association of Bangalore Animation Industry and Start-up Karnataka, the event will be held from 27 February to 1 March here.

It is expected to bring together creators, studios, technologists, investors and industry leaders from the global media and entertainment ecosystem.

The state contributes nearly 20 per cent to the country's media and entertainment industry and is home to over 300 Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality studios, employing around 15,000 professionals and is also supported by a strong freelance and gig ecosystem.

The theme for this year, 'Evolution Reloaded,' reflects the next phase of growth in AVGC and immersive media sectors.

IT Minister Priyank Kharge said the AVGC Centre of Excellence has executed around 200 projects in animation, VFX, gaming, and XR.

With the rollout of AVGC CoE 2.0, the government aims to expand access beyond Bengaluru into Tier-II and Tier-III cities, creating a distributed creative technology network, he said.

The summit will feature sessions on major productions, including 'Kantara Chapter 1', Netflix's 'Kurukshetra', 'Mahavatar Narasimha', 'Dhurandhar', and 'Lokah'.

The event will also host a dedicated AI-for-VFX track, gaming sessions, VFX masterclasses, comics street, board game launches, GAFX art challenges, and a B2B investor connect, the release added. — *PTI*

—ANI

J&K Assembly adjourns after obituary tributes

JAMMU, 2 FEB

The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly was adjourned for the day on Monday following obituary references to two veteran leaders who recently died. The Budget session started with an address by Lieutenant Governor **Manoj Sinha**, then the Speaker paid tribute to former MLA Ghulam Mohammad Khan, 82 of Baramulla and former MLC Khawaja Ghulam Mohammad Lone of Budgam. Only the Speaker spoke on the obituary references, saying, "The Business Advisory Committee decided to adopt parliamentary procedure on obituary references, based on a suggestion by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah last session. In Parliament, Speaker presents the obituary for former MPs, and the House is adjourned if a sitting member passes away." —PTI

YSRCP leader remanded to 14 days custody

GUNTUR, 2 FEB

High drama unfolded in Guntur on Saturday as TDP leaders and cadres ransacked YSRCP leader Ambati Rambabu's house. Rambabu was remanded to 14 days of judicial custody on Monday following his Saturday arrest in Guntur. He was transferred to Rajahmundry Central Jail early Monday morning. The charges stem from alleged derogatory remarks against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and a confrontation at Gorantla's Chillies Centre. Police claim Rambabu obstructed officers during a dispute over the removal of a TDP banner. While YSRCP alleges "political vendetta", ruling coalition leaders defended arrest as a necessary measure for maintaining law and order. Rambabu remains in custody as legal proceedings continue. —PTI

NIA raids six locations in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, 2 FEB

The National Investigation Agency on Monday carried out searches at six locations in three districts of Kashmir as part of an investigation into the terror ecosystem in the Valley, officials said. The searches were carried out at Rafiabad, Sopore and Bomai in Baramulla district, Bandipora, and the Parimpora area of Srinagar, the officials said. The NIA officers carried out the raids at the residential premises of former Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ghulam Ahmad Shiekh, and former militant Iqbal Sheikh at Bomai. —PTI

—PTI

Election cannot be halted on personal grievance: SC

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

The Supreme Court has declared that election processes cannot be stopped or interfered with based on individual grievances. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta stated that the only remedy is via an election petition. The ruling concerned a July 2025 Uttarakhand High Court interim order, which had directed the returning officer to allocate a symbol and allow a man to contest the zila panchayat election. The Court emphasised that the right to contest elections must follow statutory law and criticised the high court's interference, citing Article 243-O of the Constitution, which bars courts from questioning elections except through election petitions. —PTI

Oppn MPs allege rise in communal rifts, inequality

Kerala CPI(M) to observe 'Black Day' over Budget neglect

T'PURAM/ MALAPPURAM/ NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

Members from Opposition parties in the Rajya Sabha on Monday accused the government of fomenting communal division amid rising economic disparities, saying the Centre needs a reality check on its claim of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'.

Participating in the Motion of Thanks on the President's address in the Upper House, Congress leader Digvijaya Singh dubbed the government as "anti-poor and anti-farmer", and Trinamool Congress MP Sagarika Ghose claimed that it was in "denial of the present-day reality".

DMK MP Tiruchi Siva alleged that parliamentary democracy norms are being flouted, bills are being bulldozed, and the voices of opposition parties are being strangled.

Singh also mentioned Rahul Gandhi's remarks on China occupying Indian territory made in the Lok Sabha, urging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi must reply to the issue.

Meanwhile, The ruling CPI(M) on Monday called for observing February 3 as a 'Black Day' across Kerala, protesting what it described as the Centre's "severe neglect" of the state in the Union Budget.

In a press statement, the party state secretariat said the Budget was presented as if Kerala did not exist on the map of India.

It pointed out that Kerala had placed 29 demands before Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman ahead of the Budget, but none of them were accepted.

Meanwhile, with Kerala in poll mode, defending the Centre, BJP state President Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the budget contains several provisions beneficial to Kerala, but questioned whether the state has the "capacity and political will" to implement them. —PTI

Kerala Congress MP KC Venugopal and other Opposition MPs protest over Union the Budget 2026-27 during the Parliament Budget session, in New Delhi, on Monday —PTI

BUSHES & MECHANISED SWEEPING TO HELP CURB DUST: MINISTER

The government is encouraging mechanised sweeping and planting of bushes to control dust in cities, the Lok Sabha was informed on Monday. Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said to control dust pollution, a city-specific plan is prepared. Under the plan, "greening" is carried out based on the requirement of a particular city. —PTI

RS flags spam calls, outward migration

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

Violation of people's privacy by companies promoting products through unsolicited calls, migration of youths to other countries and the rising medical treatment were issues raised by Rajya Sabha members on Monday during the Zero Hour. They demanded that wild boar be declared as vermin under the Wildlife Protection Act in view of human-animal conflict and crop damage. Fauzia Khan, an NCP (SP) MP from Maharashtra, said that 2.25 lakh Indians renounced citizenship in 2022, 2.16 lakh in 2023 and 2.06 lakh in 2024. Nearly 18 million Indians live abroad. The members also demanded that the activation of Rashtriya Ekta Parishad, whose purpose is to provide advice to the government on political and social issues of national importance, making internet facilities accessible to all and addressing cyber-attacks. —PTI

'KIN UNAWARE OF SWEARING-IN'

'BJP mastermind behind Sunetra becoming DyCM'

MUMBAI, 2 FEB

The Shiv Sena (UBT) on Monday alleged that the BJP leadership was the 'mastermind' behind NCP leader **Sunetra Pawar**'s swearing-in as Maharashtra's deputy chief minister, just days after her husband Ajit Pawar's death. An editorial in Saamana, the Sena's mouthpiece, further claimed that BJP leaders and NCP figures Sunil Tatkare and Praful Patel do not want the unification of the two NCP factions.

Sunetra Pawar was sworn in as Maharashtra's first woman deputy CM on Saturday, amid criticism over the speed of her appointment after Ajit Pawar's tragic death in a Baramati air crash.

Sharad Pawar, Ajit's uncle and rival NCP (SP) chief, stated he was unaware of her swearing-in.

Saamana's editorial said Sunetra Pawar's deputy CM role should not be ornamental, suggesting she is capable of working effectively. It questioned the timing, noting she left Baramati for Mumbai without hinting at the swearing-in, before completing her husband's post-death rituals, which does not fit into Hindutva beliefs. It alleged that BJP leadership orchestrated this politics.

It added that issues within the Pawar family & state politics have increased after Ajit's death, with leaders becoming more ambitious. —PTI

Raut questions Ajit's death, BJP hits back

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said former Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar died days after saying he had a BJP "scam" file, calling it "mysterious", claiming he planned to quit the BJP and rejoin Sharad Pawar. BJP MLC & women's wing chief Chitra Wagh hit back, calling claims reckless, urging court action. —PTI

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee and TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee, in South Avenue area, New Delhi, on Monday —PTI

Was humiliated: Mamata on SIR meeting with CEC

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

- Banerjee has been demanding a halt to the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in her poll-bound Bihar

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday walked out of a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over the SIR issue, accusing him of being "arrogant" and alleging that the poll panel had "humiliated" their delegation.

Wearing black shawls as a mark of "protest", the TMC supremo, accompanied by party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and MP Kalyan Banerjee, and 12 members of "SIR affected families" from West Bengal, met Chief Election Commissioner Kumar and fellow ECs here, her party said.

Banerjee, who has been demanding a halt to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in her poll-bound state, later said they "boycotted" the meeting in protest, while Election Commission (EC) officials claimed she left in a huff without listening to the response of the EC top brass on the issues raised by her.

The CEC told the TMC leaders that the "rule of law will prevail" and anybody taking the law into their own hands will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the provisions of law and powers vested in the Commission, the EC officials said.

Talking to the media after coming out of the EC's headquarters here, the West Bengal CM launched a fresh tirade against the poll panel, accusing it of working as the BJP's "dalal" (middleman).

"So many people have died, who is responsible? The EC is responsible. They are working at the behest of the BJP," Banerjee alleged. —PTI

Bipartisan leaders back strong India-US ties for peace

NEW YORK, 2 FEB

Top American bipartisan lawmakers and political leaders praised the India-US partnership and the Indian diaspora's contributions, emphasising their importance for global peace and stability. The Consulate General of India in New York hosted a reception on Saturday to mark India's 77th Republic Day, attended by government officials, business, academic, cultural leaders, Indian-American community members, and diplomats.

Delaware Governor Matt Meyer highlighted the Indian community as Delaware's fastest immigrant group, recalling the immigrant journey of Delaware's Secretary of State Charuni Patibanda-Sanchez's parents. Meyer, who plans to visit India in March with a business delegation, said, "The immigrant experience here is enmeshed in the Indian-American community."

US Representative Nick LaLota described the Indian-American community as the "third I" in Long Island, citing Harry Singh's success. Mike Lawler stressed the importance of fostering the US-India relationship, citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2023 visit. Congresswoman Laura Gillen spoke of her time in Kolkata working for Mother Teresa, emphasising bipartisan interest in strengthening ties. —PTI

SIT grills former T'gana CM KCR in phone-tapping case

HYDERABAD, 2 FEB

Former Telangana chief minister **K Chandrasekhar Rao** was questioned by the state police's SIT at his Hyderabad residence on Sunday in connection with alleged "phone tapping" during the previous BRS regime.

A team questioned the BRS president for nearly five hours.

After the questioning, flanked by his son and party working president KT Rama Rao, he greeted cadres gathered outside.

Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar said on X: "The Special Investigation Team has concluded the questioning of Gajwel MLA and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao in connection with the illegal phone-tapping case."

Rama Rao later termed the case "frivolous", alleging diversion by the Congress government, illegality of notices under BNSS and claiming full cooperation by KCR.

BRS cadres protested statewide, while Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka denied vindictive actions.

The case involves alleged illegal surveillance during the BRS regime.

On Monday, suspended BRS leader K Kavitha criticised KT Rama Rao later publicly.—PTI

2026 ASSEMBLY POLLS CHARGED UP DUE TO TVK: VIJAY

CHENNAI, 2 FEB

Actor-politician **Vijay** said TVK's entry has energised Tamil Nadu politics and urged cadres to fight the 2026 Assembly elections with a "clear and skilful strategy." He called for unity and determination to achieve the democratic goal of "seizing the throne."

Vijay launched TVK in February 2024. In a post on X, he said the party had entered its "joyful third year," adding that its political journey would continue after completing two years.

PMK plea for mango symbol

The Madras High Court on Monday issued notice to the Election Commission (EC) on a plea by PMK founder S Ramadoss seeking allotment of the mango symbol to his bloc. His counsel said the panel mistakenly sent the symbol allotment letter to former president Anbumani.

In his petition, Ramadoss alleged that Anbumani committed fraud by submitting forged documents, which were challenged in the Delhi High Court in 2025.

Speaking to reporters at his residence in Villupuram, he said rival claims of being allotted the mango symbol were made even before a court verdict, expressing confidence that his faction would receive it. —PTI

M'RASHTRA ZILLA ELECTIONS

Minister threatens of fund cut if Sena (UBT) wins

MUMBAI, 2 FEB

Maharashtra Minister Nitesh Rane launched an attack on the Shiv Sena (UBT) saying he would withhold development funds for candidates of the Uddhav Thackeray-led party if they get elected in the upcoming Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti elections.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) hit back saying the government treasury was not a private piggy bank and accused Rane of misusing power.

As many as 12 Zilla Parishads and 125 Panchayat Samitis in the state will go to polls on 7 February, with votes being counted on 9 February.

Addressing an election rally in Fonda constituency of Kankavli in Sindhudurg district on Sunday, Rane said, "I release funds after looking at the poll symbol. If I see the lotus or the bow and arrow (BJP and Shiv Sena poll symbols), funds are granted immediately. But if, by mistake, the flaming torch symbol (Sena UBT) appears, I will even cut funds that are already sanctioned."

"We had clearly warned all sarpanches to hand over their gram panchayats to us, or they would not get even a single rupee. As a result, all sarpanches quickly came to our side," he said.

Hitting back, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Akhil Chitre said the government treasury is not one's private piggy bank but public money. The remarks by Rane are not in line with democracy but an admission of misuse of power, he said. —PTI

Maharashtra minister Nitesh Rane —PTI

Bihar to provide 1 cr jobs by 2030: Guv

PATNA, 2 FEB

Bihar Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Monday asserted that the Nitish Kumar government was committed to creating one crore jobs and employment opportunities in the state by 2030.

Addressing both Houses of the state legislature on the inaugural day of the Budget session, the Governor said that maintaining the rule of law and communal harmony were the top priorities, which strove towards achieving "development with justice".

"The government has so far provided jobs and employment opportunities (rozgar) to 50 lakh youths," Khan said.

Notably, the promise of "one crore rozgar" was first made by the ruling NDA in its manifesto for the 2025 assembly polls. Citing women empowerment, he said 1.40 crore women are now enrolled with "Jeevika" self-help groups.

The government also aims to double the average per capita income of Bihar in the next five years. The state's per capita income for 2024-25 financial year was Rs 76,490. —PTI

CBI launches Op CyStrike

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), in partnership with the FBI, UK, Kuwait, Ireland, and Singapore, launched Operation CyStrike on 30 January to target transnational cyber-enabled financial crime networks operating from India and abroad.

On the same day, searches were conducted at 35 locations across Delhi, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Telangana, and West Bengal. The operations dismantled various cybercrime networks targeting victims in the USA, UK, Kuwait, Ireland, Singapore, and India.

Electronic devices such as laptops, mobiles, and hard disks containing incriminating evidence were recovered. The key operative, Pfokrehrii Peter, was arrested from the spot. —ANI

'2023 VSR crash probe in final stage'

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

The Aviation Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) said on Monday that its probe into a VSR Ventures-owned 'Learjet 45' crash at Mumbai airport from September 2023 is in the "final stages".

The update comes after a Learjet 45 owned by the same company crashed at Baramati on 28 January, killing Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and four others.

Since the Baramati aircrash, questions have been raised about the delay by the AAIB in publishing its final report into the 2023 accident. AAIB published a preliminary report with initial flight recorder findings and said on Thursday that the aircraft's black box has been recovered. —PTI

ANI

HC bans illegal crackers during 'Shab-e-Barat'

CALCUTTA, 2 FEB

The Calcutta HC has instructed the Pollution Control Board and the police to prevent the use of illegal firecrackers during Shab-e-Barat. The court said that crackers will not be allowed between 10pm and 6am. Chief Justice Sujoy Paul directed that only permissible firecrackers be used and that police provide security to the petitioner during the festival.

The West Bengal government has declared a holiday during the festival. Shab-e-Barat is celebrated on the 15th night of Sha'ban, the eighth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims believe that on the night of Shab-e-Barat, God writes the destinies of all humans for the coming year. —*PTI*

'Safe' Jabalpur canal breaches, no casualties

JABALPUR, 2 FEB

A breach in the right bank canal of the Bargi Dam in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district flooded nearby agricultural fields. The breach occurred on Sunday, near Sagda-Jhapni village, four months after the dam was declared "completely safe" following concerns over seepage. The damage caused panic as water gushed into farmlands, but no casualties were reported.

The district administration shut sluice gates as a precaution. Officials noted that although the canal's condition is bad and repairs are going on, the breach caused only minimal damage and no loss of life. Local villagers claimed the canal had been in poor shape for a long time. They said that officials had repeatedly ignored their complaints —*PTI*

ANI

4.7 quake hits Kashmir, no damage reported

SRINAGAR, 2 FEB

A 4.7 magnitude earthquake struck Kashmir early Monday, causing panic in Pattan and surrounding areas of Baramulla district. The quake occurred at 5.35am at a depth of 10km with the epicentre in Pattan, 10km northeast of Gulmarg. Tremors lasted nearly 20 seconds. No damage has been reported so far, but Kashmir remains in a highly active seismic zone. The region was severely affected by a 7.6 magnitude quake on 8 October 2005, which caused widespread destruction and heavy loss of life. —*PTI*

UP principal suspended over namaz controversy

MATHURA, 2 FEB:

A principal of a government primary school in Mathura was suspended and an inquiry initiated against him for allegedly asking students to offer namaz, officials said on Monday. Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA) Ratan Kirti said a complaint against Jan Mohammad, the headmaster the Naujheel Primary School, was received on 30 January from BJP's Naujheel block president Durgesh Chauhan. The teacher had been attempting to make students embrace Islam. He allegedly portrayed Islam to be superior to other religions and made derogatory remarks against Hindu deities. According to the complaint, Chauhan claimed that parents of students had approached him alleging that the principal asked students to offer namaz and that they were barred from singing the national anthem in the school. —*PTI*

SC rejects PIL on caste data in census

Petitioner wants transparent questionnaire on caste placed in public domain

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

The Supreme Court today refused to entertain a PIL questioning the procedure to be adopted to record, classify and verify the caste data of citizens in the 2027 general census.

The court, however, asked the Centre and the office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner to consider the suggestions made by the petitioner Aakash Goel, an academician, on the issue.

Goel, represented by senior advocate Mukta Gupta, said a transparent questionnaire, to be used for recording, classifying and verifying the caste details of citizens, must be placed in the public domain.

The advocate said that the Directorate of Census Operations has not disclosed the criteria for recording the caste identity of citizens "notwithstanding the acknowledgement that caste enumeration has extended beyond the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes this time."

The bench told the petitioner there is "no pre-determined data" to identify caste data.

The Supreme Court asked the Centre and the Registrar General and Census Commissioner to consider the suggestions in Aakash Goel's PIL —*PTI*

"The census exercise is regulated under the Census Act, 1958 and the 1990 Rules which empowers the respondent authorities to determine the particulars of census operations," the bench noted.

"We have no reason to doubt that the respondent authority with the assistance of domain experts must have evolved a robust mechanism in order to rule out the errors apprehended by the petitioner and other like-minded persons. We find the petitioner has raised some relevant issues," the Chief Jusitice said.

The 2027 Census will be the first to include a comprehensive caste enumeration since 1931 and the country's first fully digital census. — *PTI*

SC grants bail to 3 in Pune 2024 Porsche crash case

The Supreme Court today granted bail to the three accused in the 2024 Pune Porsche accident case that claimed two lives, observing that parents should be held responsible for such incidents involving minors.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan observed that parents are unable to control their children.

On 23 January, the SC sought a response from the Maharashtra government on a plea filed by the accused Amar Santish Gaikwad seeking bail.

Gaikwad is alleged to be a middleman, who gave Rs 3 lakh to the a doctor's assistant to replace a blood sample of the accused juvenile.

On 19 May 2024, a Porsche allegedly driven by a drunk 17-year-old boy killed two IT professionals in Pune.

On 7 January, the SC sought

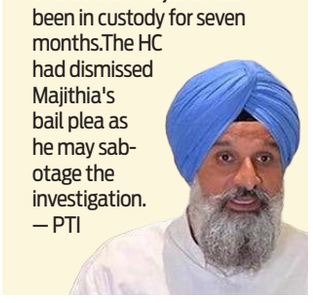
a response from the Maharashtra government on pleas filed Aditya Avinash Sood, 52, and Ashish Satish Mittal, 37, for bail.

They were arrested on 19 August 2025, as their blood samples were used for tests in connection with the two minors who were in the car along with the 17-year-old main accused. — *PTI*

Bail for SAD leader Majithia in DA case

The Supreme Court today granted bail to Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia in a disproportionate assets case.

Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta passed the order while hearing Majithia's plea challenging the Punjab and Haryana HC's order denying him bail. The SC that Majithia has been in custody for seven months.The HC had dismissed Majithia's bail plea as he may sabotage the investigation. — PTI



Bombs hurled, firing reported during Kolkata clash, 10 held

KOLKATA, 2 FEB

Bombs were hurled and bullets fired during a clash between two groups here, injuring two persons, police said on Monday.

At least 10 people were arrested after the clash which broke out in south Kolkata's Golpark area on Sunday night, a senior officer said.

"The situation is under control. Ten people were arrested early on Monday, and raids are underway to arrest others," he said.

The violence broke out on Kankulia Road at 8.30 pm on Sunday when a group of youths from another area entered the locality and were confronted by locals, he said.

Stones were hurled from both sides, creating panic in the area, the policeman said.

"Crude bombs were thrown, and at least one bullet was fired. Empty cartridges and splinters have been recovered from the area," the officer said.

Policemen patrol a street in the Golpark area in south Kolkata which witnessed a clash between two groups —*PTI FILE*

A mob later destroyed several motorcycles and made attempts to attack a police vehicle when cops arrived to disperse the crowd, he said. A large police force was deployed to bring the situation under control, the officer said.

"CCTV footage from the area is being scrutinised to identify the miscreants," he said. Locals said the violence was aimed at asserting control over the locality.

A local Trinamool Congress leader visited the area and said, "Action will be taken against those responsible for disturbing peace and public order." An investigation is underway, the police officer said. — *PTI*

6th student ends life on Goa campus of BITS Pilani

PANAJI, 2 FEB

A female student allegedly ended life in her hostel room on the BITS Pilani campus in South Goa, police said on Monday.

Vishnavi Jitesh, 20, a third-year engineering student, was found hanging from a fan with a bed sheet around her neck in her hostel room late on Sunday night, a senior official said. This is the sixth suicide reported on the institute's campus in Vasco in the last two years.

The Verna police received a call around 11.30 pm that a female student had hung herself. Police said the student hailed from Bengaluru and was in the third year of ECE. The issue of student suicides at BITS Pilani was raised in the Goa Assembly. Chief Minister Sawant said students committed suicide due to exam pressure. The institute has not issued any statement regarding the incident. — *PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777

'Savarkar Sadan' can't be protected, says ASI

MUMBAI, 2 FEB

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has informed the Bombay High Court that 'Savarkar Sadan,' the residence of Hindutva ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, cannot be declared a protected monument, as the structure falls short of the 100-year age requirement.

The ASI said that the building in the Shivaji Park area of Dadar in Mumbai can be protected if it is included in the heritage list of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

The move would prevent the demolition of the structure, the ASI said in its affidavit.

The affidavit was filed in response to a PIL filed by the Abhinav Bharat Congress.

Built in 1938, 'Savarkar Sadan' housed the Hindutva ideologue and freedom fighter until his death in 1966.

The premises hosted several historic meetings, including with Subhas Chandra Bose in 1940 and with Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte in

- Built in 1938, 'Savarkar Sadan' housed the ideologue till his death in 1966. He used to meet Narayan Apte and Nathuram Godse here

1948.

The PIL sought a direction that the building be declared a "monument of national importance."

The ASI stated that it preserves only monuments declared protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, by the Centre. — *PTI*

'Metroman' Sreedharan opens office for Kerala high-speed railway line

MALAPPURAM, 2 FEB

- The development comes despite Kerala finding no mention in the Union Budget regarding high-speed railway corridors

'Metroman' E Sreedharan on Monday opened an office in Ponnani for a proposed high-speed rail project in the State.

The development comes despite Kerala finding no mention in the Union Budget regarding high-speed rail corridors. The corridors included in the Central budget are Mumbai-Pune, Pune-Hyderabad, Hyderabad-Bengaluru, Hyderabad-Chennai, Chennai-Bengaluru, Delhi-Varanasi and Varanasi-Siliguri.

Earlier last week, the Kerala Budget announced its own Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) hoping that it would be included in the Union Budget.

Addressing reporters after the opening of the Ponnani office, the 93-year-old Sreedharan, who served as the MD of the Delhi Metro, expressed confidence about securing Central nod for the project. He said that the project would be implemented by the Railway Ministry, and the Kerala government's views would be sought after a DPR is prepared. The high-speed rail line will run from T'puram in the south to Kannur in the north, with a maximum speed of 200 kmph. — *PTI*

Boy duped of gold jewellery worth Rs 85 lakh for momo

DEORIA, 2 FEB

- The boy's father said that three youths who ran a momo stall at Dumri Chauraha fled with jewellery worth Rs 85 lakh belonging to his family

Three youths allegedly gained a boy's confidence here and swindled jewellery worth Rs 85 lakh from him, after feeding him momo in exchange, police said on Monday.

An FIR was lodged in Rampur Karkhana police station in Deoria after the boy's father alleged that three youths who run a momo stall at Dumri Chauraha on the Deoria-Kasya road fled with jewellery belonging to his family worth Rs 85 lakh, they said.

The matter came to light when the boy's sister asked for her jewellery. When they opened the almirah, all ornaments were missing. The Class 7 student then said that he had given the jewellery away in exchange

for momo.

Rampur Karkhana SHO Devendra Kumar Singh said a case has been registered based on the complaint by Vimlesh Mishra, the boy's father, who is a Hindu priest in Varanasi.Efforts are on to trace the accused and a probe is on, the SHO said.

Mishra, in his complaint, alleged that the youth befriended his son who lives in the village for studies. The three youth offered momo to his son after he took jewellery from their house and handed it over to them, he said. The complainant added that the jewellery belonged to the boy and his sister. — *PTI*

Ex-Bareilly judge threatens stir in Delhi over SC/ST Act

VARANASI, 2 FEB

Former Bareilly city magistrate Alankar Agnihotri will stage a protest in Delhi from 7 February if the Centre does not withdraw the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The 2019-batch Provincial Civil Services (PCS) officer, suspended by the Uttar Pradesh government on charges of indiscipline, made the announcement after meeting Swami Avimuktesh waranand Saraswati on 1 February at the Srividya Math located at Kedarghat here.

Agnihotri said organisations of upper-castes would participate in the stir if the SC/ST Act is not withdrawn by 6 February.

On meeting Swami Avimukteshwaranand, who was allegedly prevented by the administration from taking a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam during Magh Mela in Prayagraj, Agnihotri termed it a "fortunate coincidence."

Agnihotri said people resented the new UGC rules and described the SC/ST Act as the country's "blackest law," as 95 per cent of cases registered under it were prtoved false. — *PTI*

TENSION OVER 'BABA'

Shop name triggers protests by Bajrang Dal in Uttarakhand

KOTDWAR, 2 FEB

- The controversy arose when Bajrang Dal said that people could confuse the shop's name with a Hanuman temple

Police registered three cases following protests by Bajrang Dal over a shop named "Baba" in Kotdwar, Uttarakhand.

The controversy arose when Bajrang Dal raised concerns that the name of the shop, owned by one Mohammad Shoaib, could get confused with "Siddhbali Baba," the name of a local Hanuman temple.

The protesters demanded the owner change the name. Shoaib assured them he would do so after relocating the shop.

Although the shop was shifted 30-40 metres away, protests resumed, leading to clashes on 28 January involving Bajrang Dal workers and Shoaib's associates.

The situation escalated on 31 January when the state head of Gau Raksha Dal, Naresh Uniyal, arrived with a mob demanding the arrest of gym owner Deepak Kumar, who tried to save the elderly Wakil Ahmed looking after the shop.

He also claimed that his name was Mohammed Deepak Kumar to symbolically declare that the people in the area were one irrespective of religion.

Coming to know about the matter, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi praised Deepak Kumar's attempts to protect peace and foster brotherhood among people of different religious persuasions and traditions.

The police registered a case against the protesters for disturbing peace, another on a complaint by Wakil Ahmed for using abusive language, and a third by one Prasad accusing Deepak of using derogatory language. — *PTI*

14 unpaid workers in Dubai appeal to Jharkhand govt

RANCHI, 2 FEB

Fourteen migrant workers from Jharkhand, facing unpaid wages and forced overtime in Dubai, have appealed to their state government for assistance.

The workers, from Giridih, Hazaribag, and Bokaro districts, shared a video describing their plight, stating that the private company has not paid wages for three months and is forcing them to work overtime, causing difficulties with accommodation and food.

The team leader of the state migrant control cell, Shikha Lakra, said they are verifying documents and engaging with the Indian Embassy and UAE officials for their repatriation. Social activist Sikandar Ali has called for diplomatic efforts to ensure their return, emphasising that migrant workers often face harassment abroad

The workers are Roshan Kumar, Ajay Kumar, Rajesh Mahato, Daleshwar, and others. They went to Dubai in October 2025. — *PTI*

Epstein files lay bare the moral fraud of global elite

From Silicon Valley titans and Wall Street power brokers to former heads of state and foreign dignitaries, a who's who of powerful men appears in a vast new tranche of documents released by the US Department of Justice as part of its long-running investigations into disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein.

The release of nearly three million files on Friday has reignited global scrutiny of Epstein's social and professional network, revealing correspondence, travel records and private communications involving politicians, billionaires, royalty and senior officials across continents. None of the individuals named has been charged with crimes connected to Epstein's sexual abuse of at least hundreds od girls and young women, which he denied before his death.

Among the most controversial claims is an alleged reference to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which New Delhi has categorically dismissed as false.

According to the documents, an email sent by Epstein on 6 July, 2017, to an individual identified only as "Jabor Y." includes a claim that Modi took Epstein's "advice and danced and sang in Israel for the benefit of the US president," adding emphatically, "IT WORKED!"

India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) swiftly rejected the allegation, calling it a "baseless claim from a convicted criminal" and stressing that no credibility should be attached to Epstein's statements.

Images released on Friday show former prince Andrew on all fours over a woman lying on the floor, while another shows the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein with a minor. Epstein was accused of trafficking minors —DOJ

DENIALS & DISTANCING

Across the files, many prominent figures deny any involvement in Epstein's crimes, though numerous individuals maintained personal or professional relationships with him even after he became publicly known as an alleged sexual abuser of underage girls.

Epstein was arrested in July 2019 on federal sex trafficking charges and died by suicide in a Manhattan jail cell the following month. What follows is a primer on some of the most notable names appearing in the newly released files.

PRINCE ANDREW

The man formerly known as Britain's Prince Andrew has long faced intense scrutiny over his relationship with Epstein. His name appears hundreds of times in the newly released documents, including in Epstein's private emails.

Andrew has repeatedly denied allegations by Virginia Roberts Giuffre, who claimed she was trafficked by Epstein and forced to have sex with him when she was 17. Giuffre, who settled a civil lawsuit against Andrew in 2022, allegedly died by suicide in April 2025. Late last year, King Charles III stripped his brother of his remaining royal titles, including the right to be called Prince and the Duke of York.

DONALD TRUMP

It's long been known that Epstein was friends with Trump before the two had a falling out.

The new trove of documents contains thousands of references to Trump, much of which sheds little additional light on the men's relationship. They included emails in which Epstein and others shared news articles about Trump, commented on his policies or his politics, or gossiped about him and his family.

The Justice Department also disclosed a spreadsheet created last August that summarised calls made to law enforcement tip lines from people claiming to have some knowledge of wrongdoing by Trump.

BILL CLINTON

Like Trump, Clinton spent time with Epstein more than two decades ago, including flying occasionally on his private jet and seeing him at the White House. Clinton also denied any knowledge of Epstein's wrongdoing. Clinton's representatives say the former president broke off relations with Epstein after the first round of criminal charges in 2006.

SARAH FERGUSON

Sarah Ferguson, the former Duchess of York, publicly apologised in 2011 after it emerged that Epstein had helped pay off some of her debts. Both she and Andrew were criticised for maintaining a friendly relationship with Epstein after his 2008 conviction for soliciting prostitution from a minor. Although Ferguson told the Evening Standard she would have "nothing ever to do with Jeffrey Epstein ever again", emails show that two months later she contacted Epstein seeking advice ahead of an appearance on Oprah Winfrey's television show.

ELON MUSK

Tesla and X founder Elon Musk appears several times in emails from 2012 and 2013, discussing potential visits to Epstein's Caribbean Island.

It remains unclear whether those visits occurred. Musk has since insisted he rejected Epstein's invitations, posting on X in 2025: "Epstein tried to get me to go to his island, and I REFUSED." Tesla and X did not respond to requests for comment.

RICHARD BRANSON

Virgin Group founder Richard Branson exchanged numerous emails with Epstein. In one 2013 message, Branson invited Epstein to his private Caribbean island, writing: "Any time you're in the area, we'd love to see you — as long as you bring your harem!" In another exchange, Branson suggested Epstein repair his reputation by persuading Bill Gates to publicly praise him as a "brilliant adviser". Virgin Group said Branson committed no wrongdoing, stating that any interactions were limited to business or group settings more than a decade ago.

STEVEN TISCH

The New York Giants co-owner appears more than 400 times in the files. Emails show Epstein offering to connect Tisch with numerous women over several years.

BRETT RATNER

Film director Brett Ratner appears in photographs included in the files, including one showing him embracing Jean-Luc Brunel, a French modelling agent who died by suicide in jail in 2022 while awaiting trial on rape charges. Ratner recently directed a documentary about Melania Trump.

CASEY WASSERMAN

Casey Wasserman, president of the organising committee for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, exchanged flirtatious emails with Epstein associate Ghislaine Maxwell.

In a 2003 message, Wasserman wrote: "I think of you all the time. So, what do I have to do to see you in a tight leather outfit?"

Maxwell is currently serving a 20-year sentence for sex trafficking.

EHUD BARAK

Former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak and his wife appear frequently in the files, showing continued contact with Epstein well after his 2008 conviction.

Correspondence includes plans for a 2017 stay at Epstein's New York residence, alongside routine discussions of meetings and logistics.

LARRY SUMMERS

Larry Summers, former US Treasury secretary and ex-president of Harvard University, is referenced extensively in relation to dinners and meetings with Epstein. Previously released emails show Summers contacting Epstein in 2019, after his arrest, discussing a woman Summers described as "awfully coy". Summers later called his interactions with Epstein "a major error of judgment."

HOWARD LUTNICK

Howard Lutnick, commerce secretary under President Trump, appears to have visited Epstein's Caribbean Island with his family in 2012, contradicting earlier claims that he cut ties decades earlier.

Emails show Lutnick and his wife planned to arrive by yacht with their children.

SERGEY BRIN

Google co-founder Sergey Brin made plans to meet Epstein and Maxwell in New York before Epstein was publicly accused of sexual abuse. Google did not respond to requests for comment.

STEVE BANNON

Former Trump adviser Steve Bannon exchanged hundreds of messages with Epstein, including discussions about politics, travel and a proposed documentary aimed at rehabilitating Epstein's image. In 2019, Bannon asked Epstein whether he could use his plane to travel from Rome.

MIROSLAV LAJCAK

Miroslav Lajcak, a senior adviser to Slovakia's prime minister and former UN General Assembly president, resigned on Saturday after his past correspondence with Epstein was disclosed.Lajcak has denied wrongdoing, saying his contact with Epstein occurred in the course of diplomatic duties. —*PTI*

SALAR

India needs a system-wide fix to beat air pollution

Parts of India, including Delhi, were recently blanketed in thick smog as pollution from industry and crop-burning engulfed the region. Despite progress under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), air pollution remains a persistent threat to public health.

Experts say protecting citizens reliably will require stronger coordination across government levels and departments, as pollution is shaped by diverse economic sectors, weather, geography, and siloed institutions. Single-sector fixes, such as pausing construction or banning older vehicles, cannot deliver system-wide change.

A recent study by a team including Christoph Becker and Teresa Kramarz (University of Toronto), Om Damani and Anshul Agarwal (IIT Bombay), Ronak Sutaria (Resirer Living Sciences) and the article's authors, mapped air quality governance as an interconnected system. The research examined what gets measured, enforced, funded, and what persists beyond city boundaries, aiming to identify leverage points that could maximise pollution-related health benefits.

The study argues for pathways that allow communities to participate meaningfully. Building monitoring literacy through sustained funding and training ensures accountability and action beyond political cycles. A promising example comes from Bengaluru, where community groups installed hyper-local monitors near schools and hospitals. The data enabled them to highlight pollution problems and seek court-mandated enforcement, showing that community efforts complement, rather than replace, government action.

India already has extensive data streams—from satellites, reference-grade monitors, and low-cost sensors. The real challenge is translating these into actionable governance. This requires standards for calibration in local conditions, quality assurance, and protocols for integrating evidence into enforcement and planning. The study recommends certification and quality protocols for hyper-local monitoring, enabling agencies to make reliable decisions.

Other cities offer instructive models. London's Breathe programme deployed hundreds of sensors alongside reference monitors under a quality-assured framework, helping identify street-level pollution hotspots, assess traffic interventions, and evaluate policies like the Ultra Low Emission Zone. India could adopt similar approaches, standardising data for defined decision-making contexts to inform enforcement and planning.

Air pollution crosses regional and city boundaries, but NCAP often focuses on city-level actions, which cannot address all sources. For instance, even if Delhi restricts vehicles or construction, nearby coal-fired power plants continue to operate without key pollution filters. This highlights the need for governance at the airshed level—a region where weather and geography determine how pollutants spread. Governments must coordinate across jurisdictions, establish shared data standards, and create dispute-resolution mechanisms for effective action.

Sector-specific targets are also essential. Instead of simply aiming to reduce particulate matter by 20-30%, authorities should identify the sectors driving pollution in each airshed—transport, construction, industry, power, waste, and household fuels—and assign measurable targets and deadlines to relevant ministries. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) was created to implement airshed-level management under NCAP, translating pollution inventories into short-term, enforceable targets with clear accountability.

The study calls for a health-first approach to regulation. Beyond particulate targets, objectives should explicitly aim to protect public health, prioritising sources of pollution with the greatest exposure. Ronak Sutaria emphasises: "Air pollution isn't an environmental statistic; it's a public-health emergency that shows up in asthma, heart disease and hospital admissions. Mapping air quality at the neighbourhood level and linking it to health outcomes turns clean air from a promise into a right, because communities can see what they're breathing and what it means for their health, holding polluters accountable."

A health-centred framework also advances equity, as pollution exposure disproportionately affects marginalised populations. Aligning clean-air strategies with climate goals can deliver additional benefits, as upfront mitigation costs are offset by reduced health expenses and improved productivity.

Ultimately, airsheds differ, and so must the interventions to clean them. Systems thinking provides a framework to understand local constraints, design effective governance, and ensure that clean air is treated as a public service and a fundamental right, rather than a recurring crisis. By combining community engagement, robust monitoring, and coordinated, health-driven policy, India can move beyond temporary fixes and deliver lasting air quality improvements. —*The Conversation*

FREEPIK

LETTERS

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India's 2036 Olympic aspirations face tough scrutiny: Experts

- Earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed India's intention to host the 2036 Olympics, pointing to recent reforms such as the National Sports Governance Act.
- In July last year, Indian officials visited the International Olympic Committee (IOC) headquarters in Lausanne to present Ahmedabad, Gujarat state's fast growing megacity, as the proposed host. Ahmedabad and the neighboring capital Gandhinagar have outlined an Olympic plan with cost estimates ranging from $4.1 billion to $7.5 billion.
- However, according to several media reports, the IOC flagged three major concerns during discussions. These included governance issues within the Indian Olympic Association, widespread doping violations and India's weak Olympic performances.
- A final IOC decision is not expected before late 2027.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed India's intention to host the 2036 Olympics, pointing to recent reforms such as the National Sports Governance Act.

"The 2030 Commonwealth Games will be held in India, and the country is making strong efforts to host the 2036 Olympics, with the aim of giving more and more players greater opportunities to compete," Modi said.

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EXPERTS DIVIDED ON OLYMPIC READINESS

Indian sports administrators and even athletes remain divided over whether the country is ready to host the world's biggest sporting event.

PSM Chandran, a leading sports medicine and anti doping expert, believes that some of the challenges India faces are overstated.

"Pollution is not an issue since Ahmedabad — not Delhi — is bidding, and athletes can train elsewhere," Chandran, who has served as a team doctor for India at the Olympics and Asian Games, told DW.

As for doping, Chandran feels that the numbers are inflated because India tests more. He also feels that India's poor medal count matters least in bid evaluations.

"Ultimately, none of these concerns — pollution, doping, or medals — will determine the outcome. What matters most is money and influence in the bidding process," he said.

India has experience hosting major sporting events. The Asian Games were held in New Delhi in 1951 and 1982, and the capital also hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games. Ahmedabad is slated to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games.

In July last year, Indian officials visited the IOC HQ to present Ahmedabad as the proposed host —WIKIPEDIA

Shaji Prabhakaran, a football administrator and former general secretary of the All India Football Federation, said India must now project its capabilities globally.

"It is here that sports diplomacy matters. Qatar has also signaled interest, with infra structure from the 2022 FIFA World Cup as a key selling point. It will be competitive," Prabhakaran told DW. Competition for 2036 is already intense, with bids from Indonesia, Turkey, Chile, Saudi Arabia and others. Germany is also exploring bids for 2036, 2040 or 2044, with Munich, Cologne and Hamburg as potential hosts.

"If we don't make the cut in 2036, the 2040s seem more feasible," added Prabhakaran.

ALTHLETES SUPPORT OLYMPIC BID

Renowned long jumper Anju Bobby George strongly supports India's bid, arguing the country now has the capacity to host the Games.

"We're no lesser claimants than Germany. We're ready," she said. George, a bronze medalist at the 2003 World Championships, highlighted grassroots talent programs and the National Sports Governance Bill as important steps.

The bill, passed last year, aims to regulate sports bodies, improve governance and ensure accountability.

It established a National Sports Board to promote ethical practices and creates a National Sports Tribunal to resolve disputes. Acknowledging doping issues, she urged federations to act decisively.

"Hosting the Olympics would elevate sports and the nation alike, with national pride on the line," she told DW.

SHOULD INDIA WAIT A DECADE TO HOST OLYMPICS?

Citing issues such as pollution and a lack of infrastructure, veteran sports journalist Sharda Ugra urged caution.

"Ahmedabad's air this morning is showing an Air Quality Index of 175 in the unhealthy category. This will be noticed around the world," she told DW. "When you bid for an Olympics, everything is open to scrutiny."

She sees Ahmedabad as a city that is modernizing but is not yet ready for the global stage.

"Every Olympic city has been a well known, modern global city, which the German candidates are. Ahmedabad is trying to be a modern city and the next decade needs to show proof of that," she said.

Given India's scale and the diverse challenges across sport, infrastructure and environment, Urga believes the 2040s are more realistic.

"India must first host multiple world championships to demonstrate credibility," she said. —*DW News*

Rafah crossing reopens as Gaza ceasefire advances

Only 150 Palestinians allowed to cross through at a time

CAIRO/ TEL AVIV, 2 FEB

The Gaza's Rafah border crossing with Egypt reopened for limited traffic on Monday. The reopening marks a key step as the US-brokered ceasefire, which took effect on October 10, enters its second phase.

Thousands of sick and wounded Palestinians are waiting to leave for urgent medical care as Rafah operates for six hours a day, allowing the exit of only 150 people at a time. Health authorities say 1,268 people have died while waiting for transfer, and doctors warn the number will rise unless more Palestinians are allowed to exit immediately.

On the Egyptian side, hundreds of ambulances queued to receive evacuees. Egypt's Health Ministry has prepared 150 hospitals and 300 ambulances, deploying 12,000 doctors and 30 rapid response teams to assist the sick and wounded.

Thousands of wounded Palestinians await medical care as Rafah opens for only six hours a day, letting only 150 people exit at a time —CREDIT

Since October 2023, Israel's war on Gaza has killed at least 71,769 people and wounded 171,483. About 1,139 people were killed in Israel during the 7 October Hamas-led attacks, with roughly 250 taken captive.

Before the war, Rafah was Gaza's main crossing, with all others shared with Israel. Israeli troops seized it in May 2024, citing efforts to stop Hamas arms smuggling.

Israel had resisted reopening the crossing, but the recovery of the last hostage's remains last week cleared the way forward.

Meanwhile, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it killed Hezbollah operative Ali Dawood Amich in a southern Lebanon airstrike on Sunday.

Amich, a senior figure in Hezbollah's engineering unit, was reportedly attempting to rebuild the group's military infrastructure and plan attacks on Israeli forces.

The IDF described his actions as a breach of understandings between Israel and Lebanon. —*Agencies*

Norway's crown Princess' son to face rape trial

OSLO, 2 FEB

The eldest son of Norway's Crown Princess Mette-Marit, Marius Borg Hoiby, will face trial on Tuesday on 38 charges, including rape, abuse, violence, threats, and drug offences. The 29-year-old has been indicted since August after a lengthy investigation. The charges involve four alleged rapes from 2018 to 2024, violence and threats against two partners, and transporting 3.5kg of marijuana. His defence attorney stated Hoiby denies all sexual abuse charges and most violence accusations, adding he will present his version of events. Crown Prince Haakon said he and Mette-Marit do not plan to attend the court proceedings, emphasising Hoiby is not part of the royal family and has the same rights as others. The case has cast a shadow over the royal family's image. —*PTI*

Poet XJ Kennedy dies at 96 in Massachusetts

NEW YORK, 2 FEB

XJ Kennedy, an acclaimed poet, author, translator, and educator, died aged 96 of natural causes at his home in Peabody, Massachusetts. Born Joseph Charles Kennedy, he adopted the name XJ Kennedy early in his career to avoid confusion with Joseph P. Kennedy. His works include numerous poetry collections, children's books, and textbooks like The Bedford Reader. Kennedy's poetry, published in The New Yorker and The Atlantic, ranged from light-hearted to dark themes, often with biting commentary. He received awards such as the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and many more. —*PTI*

Indian climate scientist wins Crafoord Prize

HOUSTON, 2 FEB

Veerabhadran Ramanathan, an Indian-origin climate scientist, has been awarded the 2026 Crafoord Prize in Geosciences by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Known as the "Nobel of Geosciences," the award recognises his research on super-pollutants and atmospheric brown clouds, which have transformed understanding of global warming. Ramanathan's 1975 discovery at NASA revealed CFCs trap heat in the atmosphere up to 10,000 times more effectively than CO. Born in Madurai and raised in Chennai, he later advised on climate ethics. —*PTI*

World Bank Prez visits Pakistan's heritage sites

PESHAWAR, 2 FEB

World Bank President Ajay Banga visited Gurdwara Panja Sahib in Hasan Abdal and an archaeological site in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Accompanied by his spouse and officials, he visited the Jaulian Buddhist site in Khanpur, where Adviser to KP Chief Minister Muzzamil Aslam discussed the province's economic issues. Banga received a warm welcome from local officials, who also presented him with a shield. KP Archaeology Director General Abdul Samad briefed him on local heritage, praising the management of archaeological sites. The World Bank president commended the country's efforts to preserve cultural heritage. —*PTI*

Epstein files: Mandelson resigns

WASHINGTON/LONDON, 2 JAN

British Parliamentary member Lord Mandelson has been named in the latest release of Jeffrey Epstein files, prompting his resignation from the Labour Party to avoid "further embarrassment" over his links to the convicted sex offender.

In a letter to Labour's general secretary, Mandelson said he was "linked to the furore surrounding Jeffrey Epstein" and felt "regretful and sorry." Despite resigning, Mandeslon claims he is innocent, saying the "allegations… need to be investigated."

The former cabinet minister, who was sacked as UK ambassador last year because of his past connections to Epstein, appeared in documents showing that Epstein made USD 75,000 in payments to Mandelson in 2003 and 2004.

The latest Epstein files, spanning over 6 million pages of documents, images, and videos, detail the criminal activities of the late financier and his ties to global elites. Following the release, a top US Justice Department official downplayed the likelihood of new criminal charges arising from the release.

Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said that the existence of photographs and troubling email correspondence does not "necessarily" allow prosecution and the department's position remains unchanged. —*Agencies*

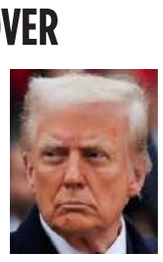
MAMDANI HECKLED OVER MOTHER'S EPSTEIN LINK

NEW YORK, 2 FEB

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani was heckled outside his residence on Monday after the release of US Department of Justice documents linking his mother, Mira Nair, to sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. Filmmaker Nair was cited as attending a 2009 after-party for a film screening at the townhouse of Epstein's convicted partner, Ghislaine Maxwell. Videos showed people outside Mamdani's home shouting "shame" and "you lied to us". —*Agencies*

TRUMP PLANS MASSIVE WASHINGTON MAKEOVER

WASHINGTON DC, 2 FEB



US President Donald Trump announced changes to the Kennedy Center, voting to rename it the 'Donald J Trump and John F Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts,' and announced it will close for a two-year construction. Trump also said he wants to reshape Washington by building the world's largest triumphal arch. The arch is part of broader renovation plans under his second administration. —*ANI*

15 killed, 7 injured as Russian drones hit Ukraine

KYIV, 2 FEB

At least 15 people were killed and seven injured from Russian drone strikes in Pavlohrad, Ukraine, on Saturday, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine reported.

Meanwhile, US-brokered talks on ending Russia's war in Ukraine will resume Wednesday and Thursday in Abu Dhabi after a brief delay, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, amid ongoing frontline fighting and long-range attacks.

A fire erupted after a strike near DTEK's coal facility in Ukraine but was quickly extinguished. CEO Maxim Timchenko called it "an unprovoked terrorist attack," the deadliest since Russia's invasion, and said teams are aiding the injured and victims' families.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed condolences, noting the strike hit an ordinary bus carrying miners. He held a coordination call on the situation across all regions.

Zelenskyy announced the next trilateral talks with Russia, mediated by the US, are scheduled for 4–5 February in Abu Dhabi. Ukraine is prepared for discussions aimed at achieving a real, dignified end to the war, he said. —*PTI*

Ex-PM Hasina sentenced to 10 yrs for corruption

DHAKA, 2 FEB

A Bangladesh court on Monday sentenced former prime minister Sheikh Hasina to 10 years in prison in two corruption cases over alleged land irregularities in a government housing project

Judge Rabiul Alam down sentencing Hasina to five years in each case, totaling 10, according to BSS.

The court also convicted Hasina's nephew Radwan Mujib Siddiq and nieces Tulip and Azmina Siddiq over the Rajuk New Town Project; Tulip got four years, Radwan and Azmina seven. Rajuk official Mohammad Khurshid Alam was sentenced to two years.

All convicted persons were fined Tk1 lakh each and ordered to serve an additional six months in jail on default.

Hasina has been living in India since 5 August and was declared fugitive. The cases were filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission over allocating two 10-katha plots, alleging violations of Rajuk rules. —*PTI*

PEACE TALKS

The US government is ready to open talks, with Turkey, Egypt and Datar working to arrange a meeting between US and Iranian officials PHOTO: PTI

US, Iran signal talks amid war fears

WASHINGTON, 2 FEB

The United States and Iran have signalled readiness to resume negotiations to defuse mounting tensions, even as Washington continues a major military build-up in West Asia and Israel prepares for multiple scenarios.

A senior US official told Axios that President Donald Trump's administration is open to talks as early as this week, with Turkey, Egypt and Qatar working to arrange a meeting in Ankara between White House envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian officials. Trump insisted his push for a deal was genuine, saying, "Hopefully we'll make a deal," while warning that failure could test Iran's threats of a regional war.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran was confident a nuclear agreement was achievable, but stressed talks must remain limited to the nuclear programme. "Let's not talk about impossible things," he said, rejecting negotiations on missiles or regional proxies, while seeking sanctions relief in return for assurances of no nuclear weapons.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that any US attack would trigger a wider conflict, even as Iran's security chief Ali Larijani said preparations for negotiations were progressing.

Meanwhile, US allies in the Persian Gulf cautioned Washington that Iran retains significant missile capabilities despite damage during last year's 12-day war with Israel, and could strike US bases across the region.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia have reportedly ruled out allowing their territory or airspace to be used for attacks on Iran.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held security meetings amid assessments the US may be closer to action. —*Agencies*

Iran summons EU envoys over terror listing

Dubai, 2 Feb

Iran on Monday summoned all European Union ambassadors in Tehran to protest the bloc's decision to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation, warning of reciprocal action. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said options were under review after the EU move, taken over the Guard's role in a deadly January crackdown on nationwide protests. The designation adds to added economic pressure on Tehran. —*PTI*

Pak kills 22 terrorists in Balochistan, toll now 177

KARACHI, 2 FEB

Pakistani security forces have killed 22 more militants in Balochistan, raising the two-day death toll to 177 after coordinated attacks. Most killed belonged to the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA).

The operation followed attacks by militants, including two female suicide bombers, in 12 towns, which killed at least 17 security personnel and 18 civilians, including three women and two children in Gwadar. Mobile and internet services were suspended in several cities during clean-up operations.

Framing women's participation as ideological, BLA released footage of women fighters in "Operation Herof Phase II." Fidayee Hawa Baloch appeared in combat footage before being killed, while 23-year-old Asifa Mengal claimed a recent vehicle-borne attack on ISI headquarters in Noshki.

Balochistan, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, has a long-running insurgency, with attacks often targeting the 60 billion CPEC projects. Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti reaffirmed the government's resolve to eliminate insurgents. —*Agencies*

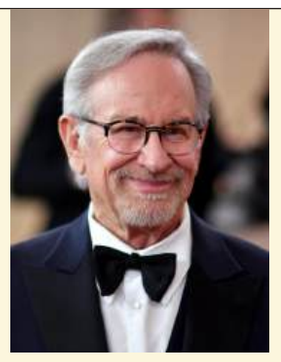
BEST GLOBAL MUSIC

And the Grammy goes to...

The 68th Grammy Awards in Los Angeles saw hip-hop star Kendrick Lamar scoop five trophies, extending his record as one of the most prolific rappers. Meanwhile, Puerto Rican sensation Bad Bunny made history by winning Album of the Year, the first Spanish album to win a Grammy. Music's biggest night also saw host Trevor Noah take digs at US President Donald Trump. Here are the winners...

INDIANS MISS OUT ON GRAMMYS

Indians missed out at the Grammys this year, with sitarist Anoushka Shankar losing the Global Music Performance award to Bad Bunny's 'EoO', which also included Shakti's 'Shrini's Dream (Live)'. Sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar's daughter also missed the Global Music Album prize, won by Caetano Veloso and Maria Bethânia. Shakti did not win the Global Music Album category award.



EGOT SPIELBERG

'Music for John Williams' won the Best Music film, giving director Steven Spielberg his first Grammy. That makes him an EGOT winner — an artist with an Emmy, Grammy, Tony and Oscar.

Bad Bunny

Best Global Music Performance: **Bad Bunny — 'EoO'**

Album of the Year: **Bad Bunny — 'Debí Tirar Más Fotos'**

The sixth time host Trevor Noah earned US President Donald Trump's ire due to his Jeffrey Epstein joke. Noah said: "That's a Grammy every artist wants... almost as much as Trump wants Greenland... since Epstein's island is gone, he needs a new one to hang with Bill

Kendrick Lamar

- Record of the Year: **'Luther'**
- Best Rap Album: **'GNX'**
- Best Rap Song: **'TV Off'**
- Best Melodic Rap Performance: **'Luther'**
- Best Rap Performance: **'Chains & Whips'**

- Song of the Year: **Billie Eilish — 'Wildflower'**
- Best Pop Solo Performance: **Lola Young — 'Messy'**
- Best Pop Vocal Album: **Lady Gaga — 'Mayhem'**
- Best Contemporary Country Album: **Jelly Roll — 'Beautifully Broken'**
- Best Música Urbana Album: **Bad Bunny — 'Debí Tirar Más Fotos'**
- Best New Artist: **Olivia Dean**
- Best Dance-Pop Recording: **Lady Gaga — 'Abracadabra'**
- Best Rap Performance: **Clipse ft Kendrick Lamar & Pharrell Williams — 'Chains & Whips'**
- Best Pop Duo/Group Performance: **Cynthia Erivo & Ariana Grande — 'Defying Gravity'**
- Best Rock Song: **Nine Inch Nails — 'As Alive As You Need Me to Be'**
- Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media: **'Sinners'**
- Best Music Video: **Doechii — 'Anxiety'**
- Best Song Written for Visual Media: **Huntr/x — 'Golden'**
- Best African Music Performance: **Tyla — 'PUSH 2 START'**
- Producer of the Year: **Cirkut**
- Songwriter of the Year: **Amy Allen**

Gold rebounds to Rs 1.48L/10g; silver extends losses

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

Gold prices recovered to Rs 1.48 lakh per 10g in futures trade on Monday after an early sharp fall that triggered the lower circuit level, while silver extended losses to witness heavy selling for the third consecutive day. On the MCX, gold futures rebounded strongly, erasing all of its losses to trade higher by Rs 259, or 0.18 per cent, to Rs 1,48,012 per 10g in a business turnover of 8,501 lots. In addition, silver futures remained under pressure, opening lower and declining Rs 39,847, or 15 per cent, to later pare some of its losses to trade at Rs 2,50,242 per kilogram, down 5.8 per cent, or Rs 15,410, in 6,892 lots. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 42P, closes at 91.51 against USD

MUMBAI, 2 FEB

The rupee gained 42 paise to close at 91.51 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, a day after the Union Budget 2026-27 was presented, largely as crude oil prices retreated from their elevated levels. Forex traders said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) seemed to be defending the 92 per dollar level with a lot of resolve. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 91.95 against the US dollar, then gained some ground to touch an intraday high of 91.45 and a low of 91.95 against the greenback. At the end of the trading session on Monday, the rupee was quoted at 91.51 (provisional) against the greenback. *—PTI*

Digantara & S'pore defence ink deal on space awareness

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

India's Digantara Industries has partnered with Singapore's Defence Science and Technology Agency to co-develop tools for space situational awareness, aimed at safeguarding national satellites from collisions with orbital debris. The Bengaluru-based firm said this marks the first agreement between Singapore's defence arm and an Indian space-tech company in this domain. The partnership, announced at the Space Summit 2026 in Singapore, will support the National Space Agency of Singapore. Digantara will provide flight dynamics services, conjunction screening alerts and AI-driven analytics by integrating its sensor data. The agreement also includes participation by Singapore in upcoming space-based sensor missions. Digantara said the tie-up strengthens its Asia-Pacific expansion strategy while enhancing satellite tracking accuracy globally. *—PTI*

Apple hits highest-ever record of 28% value share in India

Apple has reached its highest-ever value share of 28 per cent in the Indian smartphone market, driven by a growing trend of premiumisation where consumers prefer high-end devices. The report by Counterpoint Research highlights a shift in India's second-largest smartphone market, with value expansion outpacing volume growth as buyers upgrade to more expensive models. Apple's market share increased from 23 per cent in 2024, aided by the success of the iPhone 16, along with attractive financing schemes. The company led the market in value terms in 2025, supported by festival promotions and expanded channel presence. The iPhone 16 ranked as the top-shipped model, marking the highest annual shipment share for an iPhone in India. In 2025, India's smartphone market grew 1 per cent in volume and 8 per cent in value. *—PTI*

Biz confidence slips to lowest in 3 years as PMI rises

-PTI

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

India's manufacturing sector activity witnessed a slight recovery in January, amid faster increase in new orders, a monthly survey said on Monday.

Meanwhile, business confidence slipped to its lowest level in three-and-a-half years during January, as only 15 per cent of companies foresee output growth in the year ahead and 83 per cent forecast no change.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), rose from a two-year low of 55 in December to 55.4 in January.

In the PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"Indian manufacturing firms saw a rebound in January, driven by increased new orders, output, and employment. Input costs rose moderately, while the pace of growth in factory-gate prices eased, resulting in slight margin pressure for manufacturers," said Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC.

Demand buoyancy, new business growth and tech investment supported production.

The main impetus to overall sales came from the domestic market.

However, new export business increased, with greater demand from Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe and the Middle East.

Although goods producers hired staff, the pace of job creation was 'slight', the quickest in three months.

The HSBC India Manufacturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses of purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers *—PTI*

Markets rebound over 1% after Budget-day drubbing

Sensex jumps 943.52 pts, while Nifty climbs 262.95 pts

MUMBAI, 2 FEB

Stock markets rebounded on Monday with benchmark Sensex jumping by 943 points on value buying in blue-chip oil & gas, banking and auto shares after facing a massive drubbing on the Budget day.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 943.52 points or 1.17 per cent, to settle at 81,666.46. During the day, it surged 1,009.31 points or 1.25 per cent to a high of 81,732.25.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 262.95 points or 1.06 per cent to end at 25,088.40. During the day, it advanced 282.65 points or 1.13 per cent to 25,108.10.

A sharp decline in global crude oil prices offered relief to the markets, experts said. From the Sensex firms, Power Grid jumped 7.61 per cent and Adani Ports climbed 4.76 per cent.

Bharat Electronics, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, L&T, InterGlobe Aviation, ICICI Bank and UltraTech Cement were among the other major gainers.

Axis Bank, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Trent and Titan were the laggards.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced measures to boost manufacturing, offered long-term tax incentives for global data centres, and support for agriculture and tourism as she unveiled a Rs 53.5 lakh crore Union Budget for 2026-27, seen as a long-term blueprint for sustaining growth amid rising global risks.

Shunning populist measures despite five key states, including West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, heading to polls, the Budget signalled continued fiscal consolidation and infrastructure spending.

On Sunday, the BSE benchmark ended at 80,722.94, down 1,546.84 points or 1.88 per cent. The Nifty tanked 495.20 points or 1.96 per cent to settle at 24,825.45 *—PTI*

-PTI

Stockbroking firms continue its downtrend

Shares of stockbroking firms continued to slide on Monday after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an increase in the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on Futures and Options trade to discourage small investors from speculative trading in derivatives. The stock of Billionbrains Garage Ventures, the parent company of Groww, tanked 5.86 per cent, Geojit Financial Services lost 2.98 per cent, Anand Rathi Share And Stock Brokers declined 2.30 per cent, Angel One edged lower by 2.26 per cent, and 5paisa Capital dipped 2 per cent on the BSE. These stocks had also faced selling pressure in the previous trade

FISCAL PATH

Budget FY27 to drive macro stability: Fitch

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

India's budget demonstrates the ongoing commitment to maintaining macro stability through a gradual path of government debt reduction balanced against a still-robust capex program to enhance growth prospects, Fitch Ratings said on Monday.

While the budget did not flag specific large-scale reform announcements, Fitch said it expects more reforms to be forthcoming, particularly on the deregulation agenda.

Strong GDP growth is driving positive momentum in several of India's sovereign credit metrics and if sustained, could improve the credit profile over time, even as lingering fiscal challenges remain, it said.

Building on recent reform momentum should help accelerate private investment and give greater upside and resilience to India's potential growth, Fitch added.

It said fiscal consolidation is set to be very modest with fiscal deficit target at 4.3 per cent of GDP in FY27, just a touch below 4.4 per cent in FY26.

"The slowing pace of consolidation is in line with our view that further progress on deficit reduction is becoming more difficult without compromising more on GDP growth," Fitch said.

The government opted to keep capex spending relatively stable at 3.1 per cent of FY27 GDP rather than pursue a greater degree of consolidation. This likely reflects an effort to offset lagging private investment. *—PTI*

Sustaining 7-8% growth top priority: FM

Sustaining a seven to eight per cent economic growth is the government's top priority, as it will benefit all citizens and create more jobs, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said.

She said employers are increasingly recognising the value women bring to the workforce with their efficiency and precision. This are rising number of women in semi-skilled roles.

Meanwhile, the central government will have to ensure that its fiscal targets and debt glide path are adhered to, considering the huge amounts that will be given to the states post the implementation of the 16th Finance Commission recommendations, expenditure secretary V Vualnam said.

TO ENHANCE CAP BASE

FinMin mulls raising FDI in PSU banks to 49%: DFS

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

The Finance Ministry is contemplating hiking foreign direct investment in public sector banks to 49 per cent from the current 20 per cent to enhance their capital base.

"We are still considering, and inter-ministerial consultation is on for raising FDI cap to 49 per cent," Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju said.

The FDI limit in public sector banks (PSBs) and private sector banks is 20 per cent and 74 per cent, respectively.

In case of private sector banks, up to 49 per cent of FDI is allowed through the automatic route and beyond 49 per cent and up to 74 per cent, the government route is applicable.

The holding of the number of shares of union government in 12 PSBs has not declined since 2020.

Even though the number of shares held by the union government has not declined, the respective percentage of its shareholding has declined in some of these banks due to the raising of capital through the issuance of fresh shares by banks.

About the IDBI Bank strategic sale, the Secretary said financial bids would be invited during this month or next month. *—PTI*

- The Finance Ministry is contemplating hiking foreign direct investment in public sector banks to 49 per cent from the current 20 per cent to enhance their capital base.

Indonesia allows Grok back online under supervision

JAKARTA, 2 FEB

Indonesia has allowed Elon Musk's AI chatbot Grok to restart operations on a conditional basis and under strict supervision, weeks after banning it for explicit sexual content.

Musk's social platform, X Corp, committed in writing to improve services and comply with relevant laws, according to a statement from the Communications Ministry.

The company has taken steps to address misuse, including restricting certain features. Indonesia and Malaysia were the first countries to block Grok in January over concerns of misuse related to sexually explicit and non-consensual images.

Indonesia's digital space supervision Director General, Alexander Sabar, stated that Grok's operations are not unconditional and that the authorities will verify the measures taken to prevent violations, including illegal content and child protection breaches. The authorities aim to ensure compliance, maintaining strict oversight of the operations. *—PTI*

FPIs pull out Rs 36,000 crore amid global jitters

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) remained net sellers in January, withdrawing nearly Rs 36,000 crore, or about USD 3.97 billion, as global uncertainties and domestic policy concerns weighed on sentiment.

The outflows followed the record FPI withdrawal of Rs 1.66 lakh crore in 2025, driven by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions, potential US tariff actions and stretched equity valuations.

According to NSDL data, FPIs pulled out Rs 35,962 crore from Indian equities during the month.

Market experts said the proposed hike in securities transaction tax announced in the Union Budget could further dampen near-term overseas participation, particularly in derivatives.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed raising Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on futures to 0.05 per cent from 0.02 per cent, and on options premium and exercise to 0.15 per cent from 0.1 per cent and 0.125 per cent, respectively.

Aakash Shah of Choice Equity Broking said the STT increase may boost tax collections but risks lowering trading volumes and slowing tactical FPI activity.

Vaqarjaved Khan of Angel One cited US tariff threats, a stronger dollar, elevated bond yields, rupee weakness near 90–92 levels and rich valuations as key triggers.

Morningstar's Himanshu Srivastava said global risk aversion, high interest rates continue to curb emerging market inflows *—PTI*

IIT-B finds way to make silk without killing silkworms

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

IIT Bombay's Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas has developed a new silk production method that does not kill silkworms, supported by Coal India through its CSR programme.

The innovative pilot project, named 'Jeevodaya', involves training silkworms feeding on mulberry leaves to lay silk threads on flat surfaces, allowing the worms to complete their natural life cycle and transform into moths.

Unlike traditional methods of boiling cocoons to extract silk, which kills millions of worms, this compassionate approach embodies Indian ethos that no one should suffer.

The project has been under research for three years, with Coal India funding from concept to realisation. Coal India's statement highlighted that Jeevodaya aims to promote sustainable income for sericulture farmers and rural livelihoods, with potential for wider adoption.

The initiative signifies a significant breakthrough in ethical silk production, combining tradition and compassion. *—PTI*

TO FREE UP $8-10B

Oracle to fire 30,000 to fund AI data centres

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

US technology giant Oracle may layoff between 20,000 and 30,000 employees as it struggles to fund its artificial intelligence (AI) data centre expansion, CIO reported, citing investment bank TD Cowen.

Employees linked to data centres and non-core units are likely to face the layoffs. Oracle is asking new customers to pay 40 per cent of fees upfront to cut costs. It is also exploring "bring your own chip" models, where customers supply their own hardware. The company had already cut around 10,000 jobs in late 2025 and has reduced staff at Cerner multiple times since buying it.

TD Cowen stated that cutting jobs could free up $8-10 billion. Oracle also plans to sell some businesses, including its healthcare software unit Cerner to reduce expenditure.

Several US banks have pulled back from financing its projects. However, Asian banks are still lending to Oracle at higher interest rates. This may help Oracle expand outside the US, but it does not solve its shortage of data centre capacity.

Because of these delays, OpenAI has reportedly moved part of its near-term computing needs to rivals like Microsoft and Amazon. Tech layoffs have been on the rise, with many companies, including Amazon, Meta, and Google, carrying out several rounds of layoffs in recent years.

According to Layoffs.fyi data, 1.23,941 tech employees were laid off across 269 tech companies globally in the year 2025. *—Agencies*

-PTI

Players will follow govt decision: Salman Ali Agha

MUMBAI, 2 FEB

Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha, on Monday, said the players will follow the instructions from the government or the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) with regard to boycotting the marquee T20 World Cup match against India on February 15 in Colombo. Salman told the media before leaving with the team for Colombo that the players had been informed about the decision by the team manager on Sunday immediately after the match against Australia."We are players contracted to the Board, and whatever decision our government and Board have taken, all the players are on board with it," he said.

-PTI

Mumbai Open 2026: Ankita Raina crashes out

MUMBAI, 2 FEB

What appeared to be a blessing in disguise turned into a harsh lesson in reality as India's Ankita Raina crashed out in the opening round of the L&T Mumbai Open 125K Series at the Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) centre court here on Monday. Ankita, who benefited from the withdrawal of top seed Lulu Sun of New Zealand due to illness, failed to capitalise on the opportunity as Japan's Misaki Matsuda outplayed her in straight sets, 6-4, 6-0, on the opening day of the main draw. Matsuda set the tone early with her aggressive intent, combining depth from the baseline with frequent forays to the net. The Japanese player consistently put Raina on the back foot, using crisp volleys to deny the Indian any rhythm in extended rallies. —*PTI*

India qualified for Tent Pegging World Cup finals

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

India on Monday qualified for the Tent Pegging World Cup Championships to be held in Jordan in November 2026 after a strong showing in the qualifying competition, where they won a total of six medals, including four team medals and two individual honours. The Indian team comprised Dfr Sandeep, Dfr Dhanraj Sirsat, Dfr Bonge Ganesh Baliram and ASI Singh, all of whom contributed to the team medals across events. Competing against traditional powerhouses such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Norway and Indonesia, the Indian contingent delivered a consistent performance across lance, sword and combined events to secure an overall bronze medal and confirm their place in the World Cup finals in Jordan.—*PTI*

Mercedes ready to win F1 world title, says Russell

PARIS, 2 FEB

George Russell believes he has been handed a car ready to win the world championship as Mercedes heads into a new era for Formula One as the title favourite. Under the leadership of Toto Wolff, Mercedes won eight consecutive constructors' championships and seven drivers' titles between 2014 and 2021. Since Russell joined in 2022, it has struggled to keep pace with Red Bull and McLaren. However, a major upheaval of the sport's technical rulebook for the new season means a fresh start for all the teams on the grid. —*PTI*

No Indo-Pak contest, WC could cause losses upto USD 250 million

Boycotting Indo-Pak fixture, ICC right to pull up Pak: Rajeev Shukla

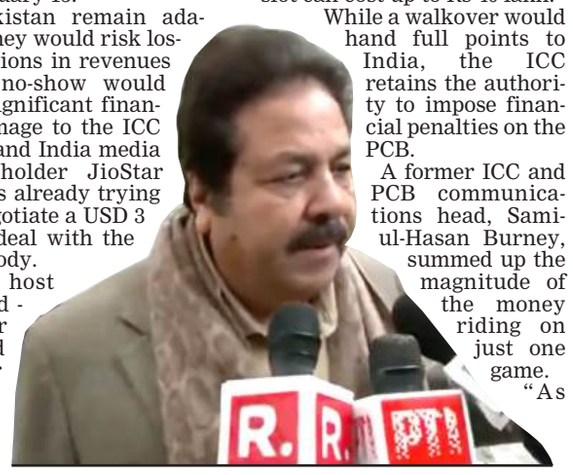
NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

An India-Pakistan fixture in an ICC event generates revenue to the tune of a staggering "USD 250 million (over Rs 2200 crore)", as per some estimates and the absence of the cash-cow fixture from the upcoming T20 World Cup is certain to cause heavy losses to all stakeholders.

Such is the pull of the contest between the arch-rivals, who only play in multi team competitions due to the tense relations between the two countries, that the ICC places them in the same pool in every world event.

On Sunday, the Pakistan government announced its team's boycott of the marquee clash in Colombo on February 15.

If Pakistan remain adamant, they would risk losing millions in revenues and a no-show would cause significant financial damage to the ICC coffers and India media rights holder JioStar which is already trying to renegotiate a USD 3 billion deal with the world body.



The host broadcaster could incur advertisement revenue losses in the range of Rs 200 crore to Rs 250 crore for a marquee game whose 10 second commercial slot can cost up to Rs 40 lakh.

While a walkover would hand full points to India, the ICC retains the authority to impose financial penalties on the PCB.

A former ICC and PCB communications head, Samiul-Hasan Burney, summed up the magnitude of the money riding on just one game.

"As regards the sanctions or the losses, as I said, the one match is costing USD 250 million (everything accounted for not just broadcaster's loss). Pakistan's annual revenue is USD 35.5 million, so there is a big, big difference," he told PTI.

BCCI vice-president **Rajeev Shukla** on Monday said the International Cricket Council (ICC) was right in warning Pakistan of severe repercussions for its selective pullout from the high-profile T20 World Cup contest against India in Colombo on 15 February.

Pakistan's decision, conveyed through an official government statement, is being seen as a political protest linked to Bangladesh's removal from the tournament after the world body declined its request to shift matches from India to Sri Lanka on security grounds.

The ICC has already warned the Pakistan Cricket Board that a boycott of the marquee fixture could lead to punitive sanctions and said that the decision is not in the interest of the game in general.

"The ICC has issued a big statement on this subject. It has highlighted the element of sportsmanship. We completely agree with the ICC. BCCI will not make any comment until we speak to the ICC," Shukla told reporters here.

The raging controversy was sparked by Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from the IPL on instructions of the BCCI for unspecified reasons. Bangladesh refused to travel to India after that, citing security concerns. —*PTI*

TATA STEEL MASTERS TITLE

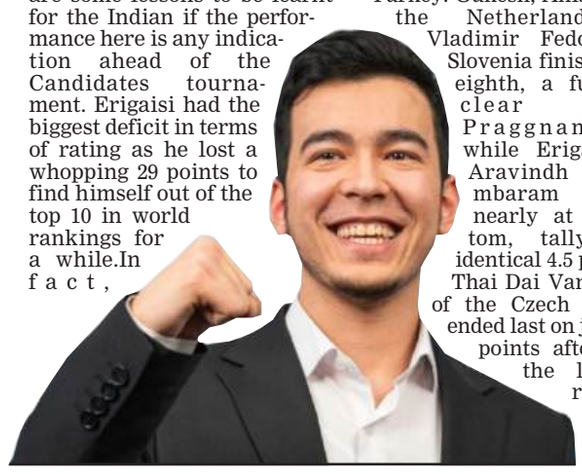
Abdusattorov wins, Gukesh best Indian at joint eighth

WIJK AAN ZEE, 2 FEB

Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan clinched the Tata Steel Masters title with a black-piece victory against out-of-form Arjun Erigaisi, while world chess champion D Gukesh emerged as the best Indian with a joint eighth finish as the tournament concluded here on Monday.

Gukesh drew with Vincent Keymer of Germany in the final round to end as the top-performing Indian on 6.5 points. But his fifty per cent score was below par, and the Indian ace slipped below the 2750 rating mark.

Praggnanandhaa also drew the last round with Jorden van Foreest of the Netherlands to end on 5.5 points, and there are some lessons to be learnt for the Indian if the performance here is any indication ahead of the Candidates tournament. Erigaisi had the biggest deficit in terms of rating as he lost a whopping 29 points to find himself out of the top 10 in world rankings for a while.In fact, Gukesh is the only Indian player ranked at number 10 on the live rating list and much to the surprise of the chess buffs, there is no Indian above a 2750 rating. Abdusattorov scored a commendable nine points out of 13 games, while his junior compatriot and World Cup winner Javokhir Sindarov made it an Uzbek domination by finishing second, a half point behind. Foreest, Keymer and Hans Niemann of the United States ended tied third on 7.5 points, a half point in front of Matthias Bluebaum of Germany and tournament sensation 14-year-old Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus of Turkey. Gukesh, Anish Giri of the Netherlands and Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia finished joint eighth, a full point clear of Praggnanadhaa, while Erigaisi and Aravindh Chithambaram finished nearly at the bottom, tallying an identical 4.5 points. Thai Dai Van Nguyen of the Czech Republic ended last on just three points after losing the last five rounds. —*PTI*



WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

DC eye 4th straight WPL final as GG chase maiden berth

VADODARA, 2 FEB

Runners-up in the first three editions, perennial bridesmaid Delhi Capitals will seek to make their fourth straight finals when they take on an ambitious Gujarat Giants side in the Women's Premier League eliminator here on Tuesday.

One of the most consistent sides in the league's brief history, the Capitals once again navigated the league phase successfully to finish among the top three, making them the only team to qualify for the playoffs in all four seasons so far.

With the bat, Kapp's compatriots Laura Wolvaardt (241 runs) and Lizelle Lee (240) have provided solidity at the top of the order, though India opener Shafali Verma's (208) inconsistency remains a concern.

The Capitals, however, will take heart from skipper Jemimah Rodrigues rediscovering her touch in a pressure situation in the previous match after struggling for consistency through the season. Gujarat Giants, on the other hand, head into the eliminator with momentum firmly on their side after recovering impressively from a three-match losing streak. They will also draw confidence from having beaten Delhi Capitals in both their league games this season, with veteran New Zealander Sophie Devine playing a decisive role on both occasions.

Sophie Devine -PTI

The Kiwi star has been the standout performer of the tournament, emerging as the leading wicket-taker with 17 scalps from eight matches, while also scoring 237 runs, including two half-centuries.

Devine's all-round brilliance has made her the Giants' biggest match-winner. The match starts at 7:30 pm. —*PTI*

WPL POINTS TABLE

TEAM	P	W	L	PT
RCB(Q)	8	6	2	12
GG(Q)	8	5	3	10
DC(Q)	8	4	4	8
MI	8	3	5	6
UPW	8	2	6	4

Jagadeesan's 100 powers India A victory over USA in warm-up match

MUMBAI, 2 FEB

N. Jagadeesan scored a blistering century to power India A to a comfortable 38-run victory over the USA in their ICC T20 World Cup warm-up match at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai on Monday, 2 February.Jagadeesan completed his century from 49 balls in a dazzling display that saw his score 11 fours and five sixes.

The veteran batted was ably supported by cameos from Priyansh Arya and Tilak Varma, before India A skipper Ayush Badoni put the finishing touches on the innings with 60 not out from 26 deliveries as India A finished on 238 for three.

USA was behind the asking rate from the start of the chase, and though a few batters were able to play some eye-catching strokes, it never came close to threatening the target.

USA openers Monank Patel and Andries Gous got its chase off to a brisk start, but once skipper Monank was dismissed by Ravi Bishnoi, the visitor quickly fell behind the asking rate. Gous (44, 31b, 5x4, 2x6) struck a few lusty blows before holing out against Tilak, while the rest of the USA top-order struggled. —*PTI*

SL bowler Malinga is doubtful for T20 WC

COLOMBO, 2 FEB

Sri Lanka fast bowler Eshan Malinga looks set to miss this month's T20 World Cup on home soil after dislocating his shoulder during Sunday's match against England, the country's cricket board said on Monday.

The 24-year-old, who has taken eight wickets in the same number of T20 matches for Sri Lanka, suffered the injury during his second over on Sunday and was unable to continue as England won the 20-over match by six wickets to secure a series win in Kandy.

"Malinga suffered a shoulder dislocation while bowling... he will undergo an MRI scan to assess the extent of the injury and determine the next course of action," Sri Lanka Cricket posted on Instagram. —*PTI*

Alcaraz gets a kangaroo tattoo after winning AO

MILAN, 30 OCT

Alcaraz posed for photographers Monday with the ornate Australian Open trophy, looking casually stylish in black, in loafers and no socks. The photo shoot took place at the Royal Exhibition Building among the gardens in central Melbourne

Every major champion has their rituals, but Carlos Alcaraz might have the coolest one. For the Spaniard, trophies don't just go on the shelf, they go under the skin. Wimbledon brought a strawberry, Roland Garros an Eiffel Tower and the US Open a bold design featuring the Statue of Liberty.

Now, having triumphed at the Australian Open to complete the Career Grand Slam, what tattoo will join the growing gallery?

"I've said it's going to be a kangaroo, for sure, a little kangaroo," Alcaraz said after he defeated Novak Djokovic in Sunday's final.

The women's singles winner, Elena Rybakina, was photographed with her trophy Saturday on the banks of the Yarra River, which runs through Melbourne.

According to Australian media reports, Alcaraz spent the night after his victory with his family in his hotel suite, ordering pizza, beer, and champagne. In a social media post to fans during the photo shoot, Alcaraz said, "I still can't believe that I just made it. —*PTI*

India loses to Bangladesh in SAFF U-19 Women's Championship

-PTI

POKHARA, 2 FEB

India lost to Bangladesh 2-0 in a group-stage game of the SAFF Under-19 Women's Championship 2026, which took place at the Pokhara Rangasala Stadium in Pokhara, on Monday.

The Bengal Tigers took the lead in the 29th minute through Aprita Biswas. Alpi Akter doubled her side's lead before half-time.

Bangladesh, a five-time champion, secured its spot in the final with two wins from as many games — it thrashed Bhutan 12-0 in its group-stage opener, before adding another win against India.

Although this is a U-19 tournament, India has travelled to Pokhara with a U-17 squad that is preparing for the AFC U-17 Asian Cup, set to be held later this year. The Young Tigresses, who had begun their campaign with a 1-0 win against host Nepal, will need to win their last group match to keep their progression hopes alive.

The final group matches will take place on Wednesday, February 4, with India taking on Bhutan and Nepal meeting Bangladesh.The final is scheduled for 7 February. —*PTI*

INDIA WINS MEN'S QUADRANT GOLD

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB

India secured the gold medal at the Asia Sepaktakraw Championship 2026 after beating Japan in the Men's Quadrant final at the Nagoya City Mizuho Park Gymnasium in Nagoya, Japan, on Monday.

India beat host Japan 15-10, 12-15, 15-12 in the summit clash to take top honours.

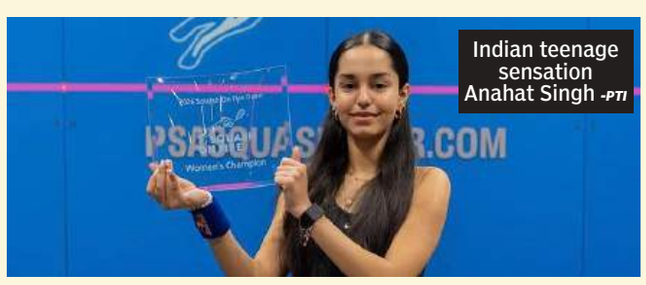
Earlier, India qualified for the knockouts after beating Malaysia and South Korea to top Group B before defeating Thailand in straight sets in the semifinal.

In March 2025, the Indian men's regu (three-player) team secured its first-ever gold medal at the International Sepaktakraw Federation (ISTAF) World Cup in Patna, Bihar. —*PTI*

SQUASH ON FIRE OPEN

Anahat wins maiden PSA Bronze-level title in Washington

NEW DELHI, 2 FEB



Indian teenage sensation Anahat Singh -PTI

Indian teenage sensation Anahat Singh produced a stunning performance to upset top seed and world No. 10 Georgina Kennedy of England 12-10, 11-5, 11-7 and clinch her maiden PSA Bronze-level title at the Squash On Fire Open in Washington.

The triumph marked the biggest title of the 15-year-old's career and her 15th overall on the PSA Tour, achieved in just 26 tournaments, with the Delhi player currently ranked world No. 31.

The seventh seed Anahat, who had lost to Kennedy in their only previous meeting, showed remarkable composure in the final, reeling off four consecutive points to snatch the opening game after trailing 8-10 and thereafter taking firm control of the contest.

"I'm thrilled. I knew I wanted to do well in these events, improve my ranking, and put in strong performances, and I'm glad I was able to do that this time," Anahat said after the win.

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